True Grit

Adaptation by

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Based on the Novel by Charles Portis

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White letters on a black screen:

The wicked flee when none pursueth.

The quotation fades.

A woman's voice:

Voice-Over

People do not give it credence that a young girl could leave home and go off in the wintertime to avenge her father's blood, but it did happen.

The street of a western town, night. The street is deserted. Snow falls.

We track slowly forward.

I was just fourteen years of age when a coward by the name of Tom Chaney shot my father down in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and robbed him of his life and his horse and two California gold pieces that he carried in his trouser band.

A shape lies in the street below the busted-out porch railing of a two-story building. A sign identifies the building as the Monarch Boarding House.

Papa was a Cumberland Presbyterian and a Mason. He'd hired Chaney—for paid wages, not on shares—when Chaney was "down on his luck." If Papa had a failing it was his kindly disposition; I did not get my mean streak from him.

The crumpled shape is a body. We hear the thunder of approaching hooves.

He had taken Chaney up to Fort Smith to help lead back a string of mustang ponies he'd just bought from a stock trader named Stonehill. In town, Chaney had fallen to drink and cards, and lost all his money. He got it into his head he'd been cheated and went back to the boarding house for his Henry rifle. Papa remonstrated, and Chaney shot him in the breast.

A galloping horse enters frame and recedes, whipped on by a bareback rider. A long-barreled rifle is tied across the rider's back with a sash cord.

He disappears into the falling snow.

Chaney fled. He could have taken the time to saddle the horse—or hitched up three spans of mules to a Concord stagecoach and smoked a pipe, as it seems that no one in that city was inclined to give chase. Chaney had mistaken its citizens for men.

DAY

We are looking into the window of a moving train.

Looking out past us is a fourteen-year-old girl, Mattie Ross. Next to her is Yarnell, a middle-aged black man. Reading backward in the mirror of the window we see a station sign easing in as the train slows: FORT SMITH.

The voice-over continues:

Voice-Over

You might say, what business was it of my father's to meddle? My answer is this: he was trying to do that short devil a good turn. He was his brother's keeper. Does that answer your question?

DEAD MAN'S FACE

Candlelight flickers over the man's waxy features.

Voice

(Irish-accented)

Is that the man?

The body, wrapped in a shroud, lies in a pine coffin. Mattie and Yarnell stand looking down at it. An undertaker, grizzled and severely dressed, holds the candle.

Yarnell

Lord lord.

Mattie

That is my father.

Undertaker
If you would loik to kiss him it would be all roight.

Yarnell
He has gone home. Praise the lord.

Mattie
Put the lid on. Why is it so much?

Undertaker
The quality of the casket and of the embalming. The loifloik appearance requires time and art. And the chemicals come dear. The particulars are in your bill. If you would loik to kiss him it would be all roight.

Mattie
No. Thank you. The spirit has flown. Your wire said fifty dollars.

Undertaker
You did not specify he was to be shipped.

Mattie
Well sixty dollars is every cent we have. It leaves nothing for our board. Yarnell, you can see to the body's transport to the train station and accompany it home, and I will have to sleep here tonight.

Yarnell
I don't think your mama'd want you to stay in this town by yourself.

Mattie
It can't be helped. I still have to collect father's things and see to some other business.

Yarnell
But I's your chap-a-rone! Your mama didn't say for you to see to no business here!

Mattie
It is business Mama doesn't know about. It's all right, Yarnell, I dismiss you.

Yarnell

Well I'm not sure I—

Mattie

Tell mama not to sign anything until I return home and see that Papa is buried in his mason's apron.

To the undertaker:

. . .Your terms are agreeable if I may pass the night here.

Undertaker

Here? Among these people?

Mattie looks around the empty room.

Mattie

These people?

Undertaker

I am expecting three more souls. Sullivan, Smith, and His Tongue In The Rain.

Mattie

How is it that you know in advance?

GALLOWS

Three men stand upon a rough-hewn three-banger gallows. The condemned are two white men and an Indian. They wear new jeans and flannel shirts buttoned to the neck. Each has a noose around his neck. One of the white men is addressing the crowd:

Man

Ladies and gentlemen beware and train up your children in the way that they should go! You see what has become of me because of drink. I killed a man in a trifling quarrel over a pocketknife.

Mattie is pushing her way through the spectators thronging the town square.

Up on the gallows the condemned speaker starts to weep.

Man

If I had received good instruction as a child I would be with my wife and children today, away out on the Cimarron River. I don't know what is to become of them. I hope and pray that you will not slight them and compel them to go into low company.

His blubbering will not let him go on. He steps back. A man standing by slips a black hood over his head which continues to bob with sobbing.

Mattie hisses to a woman nearby:

Mattie

Can you point out the sheriff?

The woman indicates a figure among the officiators on the scaffold:

Woman

Him with the mustaches.

The second condemned man is speaking:

Man

Well, I killed the wrong man is the which-of-why I'm here. Had I killed the man I meant to I don't believe I would a been convicted. I see men out there in that crowd is worse than me.

A thinking pause. He nods, shrugging.

. . . Okay.

He steps back and is hooded.

The third man steps forward.

Indian

I would like to say—

He is hooded, speech cut short. The hangman, hand to his elbow, helps him step back.

The executioner pulls a lever on the scaffold. Three trapdoors swing open and three men drop. They hit the end of their ropes with a crack.

Crowd

Oh!

Two of the men have their heads snapped to an angle and are limp and twist slowly. One, though, writhes and kicks, jackknifing his legs.

Man

Oh, Sullivan must'er lost weight in prison! His neck ain't broke!

Sullivan continues to writhe and kick.

Voice

Hot tamales?

Mattie looks down at a boy selling hot tamales out of a bucket.

. . . Ten cents?

LATER

Mattie is talking to the sheriff whom we saw officiating on the scaffold. The square is emptying and, in the background, all three men twist slowly, the last man having finally given up the ghost. The Mexican boy still hawks tamales to stragglers.

Sheriff

No, we ain't arrested him. Ain't caught up to him, he lit out for the Territory. I would think he has throwed in with Lucky Ned Pepper, whose gang robbed a mail hack yesterday on the Poteau River.

Mattie

Why are you not looking for him?

Sheriff

I have no authority in the Indian Nation. Tom Chaney is the business of the U.S. marshals now.

Mattie

When will they arrest him?

Sheriff

Not soon I am afraid. The marshals are not well staffed and, I will tell you frankly, Chaney is at the end of a long list of

fugitives and malefactors.

Mattie
Could I hire a marshal to pursue Tom Chaney?

The sheriff looks at the girl and chuckles.

Sheriff
You have a lot of experience with bounty hunters?

Mattie
My answer is this: That is a silly question. I am here to settle my father's affairs.

Sheriff
All alone?

Mattie
I am the person for it. Mama was never any good at sums and she can hardly spell cat. I intend to see papa's killer hanged.

Sheriff
I see. Well. Nothing prevents you from offering a reward, or from so informing a marshal. It would have to be real money, though, to be persuasive. Chaney is across the river in the Choctaw Nation—lawless country. It will not be a daisy-picking expedition. Upwards of three-score US marshals have been slaughtered in the Territory.

Mattie
I will see to the money. Who's the best marshal?

Sheriff
I would have to weigh that proposition. I reckon William Waters is the best tracker. He is half Comanche and it is something to see him cut for sign. The meanest one is Rooster Cogburn. He is a pitiless man, double tough and fear don't enter into his thinking. He loves to pull a cork. The best is probably L.T. Quinn, he brings his prisoners in alive. He may let one get by now and again but he believes even the worst of men is entitled to a fair shake. Quinn is a good peace officer and a lay preacher to boot. He will not plant evidence or abuse a prisoner. He is as straight as string. Yes, I will say Quinn is about the best they have.

Mattie
Where can I find this Rooster?

MATTIE'S HAND

Rapping at a door of rough plank.

After a beat, a voice—rasping and slurred:

Voice
The jakes is occupied.

Wider. We see that Mattie stands before an outhouse.

Mattie
I know it is occupied Mr. Cogburn. As I said, I have business with you.

Beat.

Voice
I have prior business.

Mattie
You have been at it for quite some time, Mr. Cogburn.

Voice
(roaring drunk)
There is no clock on my business! To hell with you! To hell with you! How did you stalk me here?!

Mattie
The sheriff told me to look in the saloon. In the saloon they referred me here. We must talk.

Voice
(outraged)
Women ain't allowed in the saloon!

Mattie
I was not there as a customer. I am fourteen years old.

No response. Mattie reaches up and raps again, vigorously.

Beat.

Voice
(sullen)
The jakes is occupied. And will be for some time.

PLANK FLOOR

A coffin is dropped heavily into frame and we see, chalked onto the freshly milled wood of its top:

Ross
Yell County
Hold at station

After a resting beat, during which the coffin's handlers presumably adjust their grip, the coffin is shoved away over the straw-littered planking of a rail freight car. Once it has been pushed fully in, the upright planking of the boxcar door blurs through frame in the extreme foreground til the door slams to rest.

We hear the steam engine start to chug, and the foreground door moves slowly off with the grinding motion of the train.

SHOP DOOR

Swinging open. It is the barnlike door to the mortician's workroom; the Irish undertaker holds it open for Mattie. She carries a bedroll.

Undertaker
You can sleep in a coffin if you loik.

Three bodies lay under shrouds on a high work table. The arm of the nearest sticks out, rope burns on its wrist. Three coffins are in various stages of assembly.

Mattie unwinds the bedroll onto the floor.

Mattie
Not. . . yet.

STREET

Mattie strides along, looking at facades. She stops, looking at the signage on a barnlike building:

Col. G. Stonehill. Licensed Auctioneer. Cotton Factor.

INSIDE

Mattie steps to the doorway of an office set in a corner of the stable.

Mattie
How much are you paying for cotton?

Stonehill looks up from his desk. He eyes the girl up and down.

Stonehill
Nine and a half for low middling and ten for ordinary.

Mattie
We got most of ours out early and sold it to Woodson Brothers in Little Rock for eleven cents.

Stonehill
Then I suggest you take the balance of it to the Woodson Brothers.

Mattie
We took the balance to Woodson. We got ten and a half.

Stonehill
Why did you come here to tell me this?

Mattie
I thought we might shop around up here next year but I guess we are doing all right in Little Rock. I am Mattie Ross, daughter of Frank Ross.

Stonehill sets his pen down and leans back.

Stonehill
A tragic thing. May I say your father impressed me with his manly qualities. He was a close trader but he acted the gentleman.

Mattie
I propose to sell those ponies back to you that my father bought.

Stonehill
That, I fear, is out of the question. I will see that they are shipped to you at my earliest convenience.

Mattie
We don't want the ponies now. We don't need them.

Stonehill
Well that hardly concerns me. Your father bought those five ponies and paid for them and there is an end of it. I have the bill of sale.

Beat.

Mattie
And I want three hundred dollars for Papa's saddle horse that was stolen from your stable.

Stonehill
You will have to take that up with the man who stole the horse.

Mattie
Tom Chaney stole the horse while it was in your care. You are responsible.

Stonehill chuckles.

Stonehill
I admire your sand but I believe you will find that I am not liable for such claims.

Mattie
You were custodian. If you were a bank and were robbed you could not simply tell the depositors to go hang.

Stonehill
I do not entertain hypotheticals, the world as it is is vexing enough. Secondly, your valuation of the horse is high by about two hundred dollars. How old are you?

Mattie

If anything my price is low. Judy is a fine racing mare. She has won purses of twenty-five dollars; I have seen her jump an eight-rail fence with a heavy rider. I am fourteen.

Stonehill

Hmm. Well, that's all very interesting. The ponies are yours, take them. Your father's horse was stolen by a murderous criminal. I had provided reasonable protection for the creature as per our implicit agreement. My watchman had his teeth knocked out and can take only soup. We must each bear his own misfortunes.

Mattie

I will take it to law.

Stonehill

You have no case.

Mattie

Lawyer J. Noble Daggett of Dardanelle, Arkansas may think otherwise—as might a jury, petitioned by a widow and three small children.

Stonehill

Where is your mother?

Mattie

She is at home in Yell County looking after my sister Victoria and my brother Little Frank.

Stonehill

I cannot make an agreement with a minor child. You are not accountable.

Mattie

Lawyer Dagget will back up any decision I make, you may rest easy on that score. You can confirm any agreement by telegraph.

Stonehill stares.

Stonehill

I will pay two hundred dollars to your father's estate when I have in my hand a letter from your lawyer absolving me of

all liability from the beginning of the world to date. The offer is more than liberal and I make it only to avoid the possibility of troublesome litigation.

Mattie

I will take two hundred dollars for Judy, plus one hundred for the ponies and twenty-five dollars for the gray horse that Tom Chaney left. He is easily worth forty. That is three hundred twenty-five dollars total.

Stonehill

The ponies have no part of this. I will not buy them.

Mattie

Then the price for Judy is three hundred twenty-five dollars.

Stonehill

I would not pay three hundred and twenty-five dollars for winged Pegasus! As for the gray horse, it does not belong to you! And you are a snip!

Mattie

The gray was lent to Tom Chaney by my father. Chaney only had the use of him. Your other points are beneath comment.

Stonehill

I will pay two hundred and twenty-five dollars and keep the gray horse. I don't want the ponies.

Mattie

I cannot accept that. *(she stands)* There can be no settlement after I leave this office. It will go to law.

Stonehill

This is my last offer. Two hundred and fifty dollars. For that I get the release previously discussed and I keep your father's saddle. I am also writing off a feed and stabling charge. The gray horse is not yours to sell. You are an unnatural child.

Mattie

The saddle is not for sale. I will keep it. Lawyer Dagget can prove ownership of the gray horse. He will come after you with a writ of replevin.

Stonehill
A what? All right, now listen very carefully as I will not bargain further. I will take the ponies back and keep the gray horse which is mine and settle for three hundred dollars. Now you must take that or leave it and I do not much care which it is.

Mattie
Lawyer Daggett would not wish me to consider anything under three hundred twenty-five dollars. But I will settle for three hundred and twenty if I am given the twenty in advance. And here is what I have to say about the saddle—

STREET

We are tracking down the street we toward the Monarch Boarding House.

Mattie is humping a saddle up the street. She stops before the boarding house. She looks at its sign. She looks at its busted-out porch railing.

INSIDE THE PARLOR

A Marjorie Main-like woman crushes Mattie to her bosom.

Mrs. Floyd
Frank Ross's daughter. My poor child. My poor child.

Mattie grimaces, arms pinned to her sides.

Mattie
You have my father's traps?

Mrs. Floyd
Oh yes we do. My poor child. Are you gawna be stayin with us or are you hurrying home to your mother?

Mattie
I am staying briefly. I have business with Marshal Rooster Cogburn. I found him in his cups today but I understand he's to be in court tomorrow, testifying. I mean to engage him to hunt down Tom Chaney.

Mrs. Floyd
Well god bless him for that. The tariff here is seventy-five cents for room and supper. That does not include your daytime eats.

Mattie
Very well.

Mrs. Floyd
Your father owed for two days, god bless him.

Mattie
Oh. Well.

Mrs. Floyd
You'll share a room with Grandma Turner. We've had to double up, what with all the people in town come to see the hanging Judge Parker's put on for us.

Mattie
Yes, I witnessed the hanging myself.

Mrs. Floyd
Was it a good'n?

BEDROOM

A blanket is unrolled to reveal a watch, a cheap knife, and a long-barreled Colt's dragoon revolver. Voice off:

Mrs. Floyd
This was in the poor man's room. This is everything, there are no light fingers in this house. If you need something for to tote the gun around I will give you an empty flour sack for a nickel.

DARK ROOM

We hear wind whistling through cracks in the floorboards and walls.

We hear snoring.

There is one bed, not large, with two shapes in it.

We cut in closer to find Mattie lying on her back, staring. She shivers, shoulders hunched. The thin blanket barely covers her.

She pulls the blanket gently, slowly, so that it covers her exposed side.

A beat of snoring, a snorfle, and then, as we hold on Mattie, the crackle of mattress ticking under a shifting body—and the blanket is pulled away toward the unseen snorer.

COURT HALLWAY

Voices echo from inside the courtroom. Mattie cracks a heavy oak door and slips in.

COURTROOM

The gallery is crowded. Mattie is at the back of a press of standees.

Her point-of-view, semi-obstructed: on the witness stand is Rooster Cogburn, a rough-hewn man going to middle-aged fat. He has a patch over one eye.

Cogburn
The woman was out in the yard dead with blowflies on her face and the old man was inside with his breast blowed open by a scatter-gun and his feet burned. He was still alive but just was. He said them two Wharton boys had done it, rode up drunk—

Mr. Goudy
Objection. Hearsay.

Mr. Barlow
Dying declaration, your honor.

Judge
Overruled. Procede, Mr. Cogburn.

Cogburn
Them two Wharton boys—that'd be Odus and C.C.—throwed down on him, asked him where his money was, when he wouldn't talk lit pine knots and held 'em to his feet. He told 'em in a fruit jar under a gray rock at one corner of the smokehouse.

Mr. Barlow

And then?

Cogburn

Well he died on us. Passed away in considerable pain.

Mr. Barlow

What did you do then?

Cogburn

Me and Marshal Potter went out to the smokehouse and that rock had been moved and that jar was gone.

Mr. Goudy

Objection. Speculative.

Judge

Sustained.

Mr. Barlow

You found a flat gray rock at the corner of the smokehouse with a hollowed-out space under it?

Mr. Goudy

If the prosecutor is going to give evidence I suggest that he be sworn.

Mr. Barlow

Marshal Cogburn, what did you find, if anything, at the corner of the smokehouse?

Cogburn

We found a flat gray rock with a hollowed-out space under it. Nothin there.

Mr. Barlow

And what did—

Cogburn

No jar or nothin.

Mr. Barlow

What did you do then?

Cogburn

Well we rode up to the Whartons', near where the North Fork strikes the Canadian, branch of the Canadian.

Mr. Barlow

And what did you find?

Cogburn

I had my glass and we spotted the two boys and their old daddy, Aaron Wharton, down there on the creek bank with some hogs. They'd killed a shoat and was butchering it. They'd built a fire under a wash pot for scalding water.

Mr. Barlow

What did you do?

Cogburn

Crept down. I announced that we was U.S. marshals and hollered to Aaron that we needed to talk to his boys. He picked up a axe and commenced to cussing us and blackguarding this court.

Mr. Barlow

What did you do then?

Cogburn

Backed away trying to talk some sense into him. But C.C. edges over by the wash pot and picks up a shotgun. Potter seen him but it was too late. C.C. Wharton pulled down on Potter with one barrel and then turned to do the same for me with the other. I shot him and when the old man swung the axe I shot him. Odus lit out and I shot him. Aaron Wharton and C.C. Wharton was dead when they hit the ground but Odus was just winged.

Mr. Barlow

Did you find the jar with the hundred and twenty dollars in it?

Mr. Goudy

Leading.

Judge

Sustained.

Mr. Barlow
What happened then?

Cogburn
I found the jar with a hundred and twenty dollars in it.

Mr. Barlow
And what happened to Marshal Potter?

Cogburn
Died. Leaves a wife and six babies.

Mr. Goudy
Objection.

Judge
Strike the comment.

Mr. Barlow
And what became of Odus Wharton?

Cogburn
There he sets.

Mr. Barlow
Okay. You may ask, Mr. Goudy.

Mr. Goudy
Thank you, Mr. Barlow. In your four years as U.S. marshal, Mr. Cogburn, how many men have you shot?

Mr. Barlow
Objection.

Mr. Goudy
There is more to this shooting than meets the eye, Judge Parker. I will establish the bias of this witness.

Judge
Objection is overruled.

Mr. Goudy
How many, Mr. Cogburn?

Cogburn
I never shot nobody I didn't have to.

Mr. Goudy
That was not the question. How many?

Cogburn
. . . Shot or killed?

Mr. Goudy
Let us restrict it to "killed" so that we may have a manageable figure.

Cogburn
Around twelve or fifteen. Stopping men in flight, defending myself, et cetera.

Mr. Goudy
Around twelve or fifteen. So many that you cannot keep a precise count. Remember, you are under oath. I have examined the records and can supply the accurate figure.

Beat.

Cogburn
I believe them two Whartons make twenty-three.

Mr. Goudy
Twenty-three dead men in four years.

Cogburn
It is a dangerous business.

Mr. Goudy
How many members of this one family, the Wharton family, have you killed?

Cogburn
Immediate, or—

Mr. Barlow
Your honor, perhaps counsel should be advised that the marshal is not the defendant in this action.

Mr. Barlow
The history is relevant your honor. Goes to Cogburn's methods and animosities.

Judge
Okay.

Mr. Barlow
Did you also shoot Dub Wharton, brother, and Clete Wharton, half-brother?

Cogburn
Clete was selling ardent spirits to the Cherokee. He come at me with a king bolt.

Mr. Goudy
You were armed and he advanced upon you with nothing but a king bolt? From a wagon tongue?

Cogburn
I've seen men badly tore up with things no bigger than a king bolt. I defended myself.

Mr. Goudy
And, returning to the encounter with Aaron and his two remaining sons, you sprang from cover with your revolver in hand?

Cogburn
I did.

Mr. Goudy
Loaded and cocked?

Cogburn
If it ain't loaded and cocked it don't shoot.

Mr. Goudy
And like his son, Aaron Wharton advanced against an armed man?

Cogburn
<u>He</u> was armed. He had that axe raised.

Mr. Goudy
Yes. I believe you testified that you backed away from Aaron Wharton?

Cogburn
That is right.

Mr. Goudy
Which direction were you going?

Cogburn
I always go backwards when I'm backing up.

Mr. Goudy
Very amusing I suppose—for all of us except Aaron Wharton. Now, he advanced upon you much in the manner of Clete Wharton menacing you with that king bolt or rolled-up newspaper or whatever it was.

Cogburn
Yes sir. He commenced to cussing and laying about with threats.

Mr. Goudy
And you were backing away? How many steps before the shooting started?

Cogburn
Seven, eight steps?

Mr. Goudy
Aaron Wharton keeping pace, advancing, away from the fire seven eight steps—what would that be, fifteen, twenty feet?

Cogburn
I suppose.

Mr. Goudy
Will you explain to the jury, Mr. Cogburn, why Mr. Wharton was found immediately by the wash pot with one arm in the fire, his sleeve and hand smoldering?

Cogburn
Well.

Mr. Goudy
Did you move the body after you shot him?

Cogburn
Why would I do that?

Mr. Goudy
You did not drag his body over to the fire? Fling his arm in?

Cogburn
No sir.

Mr. Goudy
Two witnesses who arrived on the scene will testify to the location of the body. You do not remember moving the body? So it was a bushwack, as he tended his campfire?

Mr. Barlow
Objection.

Cogburn
I, if that was where the body was I might have moved him. I do not remember.

Mr. Goudy
Why would you move the body, Mr. Cogburn?

Cogburn
Them hogs rooting around might have moved him. I do not remember.

COURTHOUSE PORCH

Mattie waits as people file out. She pushes forward to meet Cogburn when he emerges, muttering.

Cogburn
Son of a goddamn bitch.

Mattie
Rooster Cogburn?

Cogburn
What is it.

He does not look up from the cigarette he is trying to roll. His hands are shaking.

Mattie
I would like to talk with you a minute.

Cogburn
What is it.

Mattie
They tell me you are a man with true grit.

Cogburn
What do you want, girl? Speak up. It is suppertime.

Mattie
Let me do that.

She takes the fixings and rolls, licks, and twists the cigarette.

. . . Your makings are too dry. I am looking for the man who shot and killed my father, Frank Ross, in front of the Monarch boarding house. The man's name is Tom Chaney. They say he is over in Indian Territory and I need somebody to go after him.

Cogburn
What is your name, girl?

Mattie
My name is Mattie Ross. We are located in Yell County. My mother is at home looking after my sister Victoria and my brother Little Frank.

Cogburn
You had best go home to them. They will need help with the churning.

Mattie
There is a fugitive warrant out for Chaney. The government will pay you two dollars for bringing him in plus ten cents a mile for each of you. On top of that I will pay you a fifty-dollar reward.

Cogburn gazes at her.

Cogburn
What are you? *(looks at the flour sack she holds)* What've you got there in your poke?

She opens it. Cogburn smiles.

. . . By God! A Colt's dragoon! Why, you're no bigger than a corn nubbin, what're you doing with a pistol like that?

Mattie
I intend to kill Tom Chaney with it if the law fails to do so.

Cogburn
Well, that piece will do the job—if you can find a high stump to rest it on and a wall to put behind you.

Mattie
Nobody here knew my father and I am afraid nothing much is going to be done about Chaney except I do it. My brother is a child and my mother is indecisive and hobbled by grief.

Cogburn
I don't believe you have fifty dollars.

Mattie
I will shortly. I have a contract with Colonel Stonehill which he will make payment on tomorrow or the next day, once a lawyer countersigns.

Cogburn
I don't believe fairy tales or sermons or stories about money, baby sister. But thank you for the cigarette.

EVENING—BOARDING HOUSE PORCH

Mattie climbs the few steps from the street. Her attention is drawn by:

A man sitting on a chair to one side enjoying the quiet of the evening. He is dressed for riding, with perhaps a bit too much panache. It is almost dark and he is hard to see but it seems he is watching Mattie, amused.

He raises a pipe to his mouth and pulls at it. The glow from the excited bowl kicks on his eyes, which are indeed tracking her.

Mattie, discomfited by his look, turns hastily forward and pushes open the door. A jingling sound prompts one more glance to the side.

The man's face is now hidden by his hat. Just before Mattie's point of view, now a lateral track, starts to lose him behind the door jamb, he raises a spurred boot to push against the porch rail and tip his chair back. He raises his other foot, spur jingling, and drapes it over the first.

INSIDE

We are pushing in on the landlady.

Landlady
Isn't your mother expecting you home, dear? I did not think to see you this evening.

Mattie
My business is not yet finished. Mrs. Floyd, have any rooms opened up? Grandma Turner. . . the bed is quite narrow.

Landlady
The second-floor back did open up but the gentleman on the porch has just taken it. But don't worry yourself, dear—you are not disturbing Grandma Turner.

DARK BEDROOM

As before, unseen Grandma Turner snores loudly as wind whistles and Mattie shivers.

Fade to black.

Very quiet.

In the quiet, a faint crickle-crackle of flame. It is followed by a lip-pop and a deep inhale.

Mattie opens her eyes. She is beaded with sweat. She looks blearily up.

The room is dim. A man sits facing her in a straghtback chair, faintly backlit by the daylight leaking through the curtained window behind him. He exhales pipesmoke.

Cowboy
You are sleeping the day away.

Mattie

I am not well.

The man rises and, spurs jingling, crosses to the window, and throws open the curtain.

Mattie squints at him against the daylight:

The man has a cowlick and barndoor ears and is once again well-accoutered for riding. He steps away from the window and reseats himself.

Cowboy

You do not look well. My name is LeBoeuf. I have just come from Yell County.

Mattie

We have no rodeo clowns in Yell County.

LeBoeuf

A saucy line will not get you far with me. I saw your mother yesterday morning. She says for you to come right on home.

Mattie

Hm. What was your business there?

LeBoeuf takes a small photograph from his coat.

LeBoeuf

This is a man I think you know.

Mattie looks at the picture through red-rimmed eyes.

. . . You called him Tom Chaney, I believe. . .

Mattie declines to contradict. LeBoeuf continues:

. . . though in the months I have been tracking him he has used the names Theron Chelmsford, John Todd Andersen, and others. He dallied in Monroe, Louisiana, and Pine Bluff, Arkansas before turning up at your father's place.

Mattie

Why did you not catch him in Monroe, Louisiana or Pine Bluff, Arkansas?

LeBoeuf
He is a crafty one.

Mattie
I thought him slow-witted myself.

LeBoeuf
That was his act.

Mattie
It was a good one. Are you some kind of law?

LeBoeuf tips back in his chair and draws back his coat to display a star. A smug look.

LeBoeuf
That's right. I am a Texas Ranger.

Mattie
That may make you a big noise in that state; in Arkansas you should mind that your Texas trappings and title do not make you an object of fun. Why have you been ineffectually pursuing Chaney?

LeBoeuf's smile stays in place with effort.

LeBoeuf
He shot and killed a state senator named Bibbs down in Waco, Texas. The Bibbs family have put out a reward.

Mattie
How came Chaney to shoot a state senator?

LeBoeuf
My understanding is there was an argument about a dog. Do you know anything about where Chaney has gone?

Mattie
He is in the Territory, and I hold out little hope for you earning your bounty.

LeBoeuf
Why is that?

Mattie
My man will beat you to it. I have hired a deputy marshal,

the toughest one they have, and he is familiar with the Lucky Ned Pepper gang that they say Chaney has tied up with.

LeBoeuf
Well, I will throw in with you and your marshal.

Mattie
No. Marshal Cogburn and I are fine.

LeBoeuf
It'll be to our mutual advantage. Your marshal I presume knows the Territory; I know Chaney. It is at least a two-man job taking him alive.

Mattie
When Chaney is taken he is coming back to Fort Smith to hang. I am not having him go to Texas to hang for shooting some senator.

LeBoeuf
Haw-haw! It is not important where he hangs, is it?

Mattie
It is to me. Is it to you?

LeBoeuf
It means a great deal of money to me. It's been many months' work.

Mattie
I'm sorry that you are paid piecework not on wages, and that you have been eluded the winter long by a halfwit. Marshal Cogburn and I are fine.

LeBoeuf stands.

LeBoeuf
You give out very little sugar with your pronouncements. While I sat there watching you I gave some thought to stealing a kiss, though you are very young and sick and unattractive to boot, but now I have a mind to give you five or six good licks with my belt.

Mattie rolls away onto her side.

Mattie
One would be as unpleasant as the other. If you wet your comb, it might tame that cowlick.

Her eyelids droop.

Spurs jingle and fade away.

Distant voices from the street. Clanging church bell. Very close, the clink of bottle against cup.

Mattie looks blearily over. The room is now filled with long shadows.

The landlady has materialized at the side of the bed. She is pouring something from a bottle into a ceramic cup.

Landlady
Try some Dr. Underwood's. You may feel giddy but do not be alarmed as that is only the medicine working.

Mattie obediently rises to an elbow, drinks, then drops back onto the pillow. A clunk:

The landlady has set the bottle down on the nightstand.

Mattie squints at the bottle:

Dr. Underwood's Bile Activator
Approved by Physicians and Clergymen

The room's shadows grow longer still and crawl up the bottle.

The voice of the unseen landlady echoes and trails away:

Landlady
I will charge you ten cents. It probably means a loss for me, but it is hard to figure the exact proportion of the bottle. . .

From outside, the sound of a horse approaching at a gallop.

We cut outside. It is snowing, and night again.

Frank Ross's body is once again in the street before the boarding house.

The bareback horseman enters frame and recedes, rifle tied to his back.

A saddled horse stands in the middle of the street, pointed at the receding Tom Chaney.

Chaney disappears down the dark street into the falling snow.

Small hands reach up and wrap the saddlehorn on the waiting horse.

Mattie's face appears over the saddle as she tries to pull herself up.

Close on her feet rising from the ground, then pedaling, seeking purchase. There are no stirrups.

Close on Mattie again. Sweating, she succeeds in chinning and elbowing herself onto the horse's back. The sound of the fleeing horseman has receded almost to nothing.

She gets herself arranged in the saddle. She looks down for the reins.

The reins hang down from the bit.

She lies forward onto the horse's neck, a fistful of mane in one hand, reaching with the other. . . reaching down. . . her fingers curl around the reins. . . she pulls.

The horse tosses its head and rears.

Mattie's legs squeeze the horses flanks.

Her fingers tighten on the horses mane but she is slipping, falling. . .

In the boarding house bedroom Mattie's hands clutch at pillow.

It is dark.

A phlegm-hawking sound.

A woman in a nightgown, face obscured by sleeping bonnet, approaches the bed and disappears around its far side.

The sound of the old woman climbing into bed and settling.

After a beat, the covers are yanked from Mattie.

After another beat—snoring.

POST OFFICE

The door bangs open at the cut and Mattie emerges with an envelope.

It is day.

STREET

Mattie walks down the street holding the ripped-open envelope in one hand and some unfolded papers in the other, the topmost of which she reads as she walks.

We hear the letter's contents in a gruff male voice-over:

Letter

Mattie. I wish you would leave these matters entirely to me, or at the very least do me the courtesy of consulting me before entering such agreements. I am not scolding you, but I am saying your headstrong ways will lead you into a tight corner one day. I trust the enclosed document will let you conclude your business and return to Dardanelle. Your mother is in a panic and begging me to fetch you back home. Yours, J. Noble Dagget.

PAPERS

Thrust onto a desk.

Wider shows that we are once again in the office of Stonehill, the stock trader. He examines the release through bleary eyes, displaying none of his former vinegar.

Mattie

I was as bad yesterday as you look today. I was forced to share a bed with Grandma Turner.

The trader's eyes are still on the paper:

Stonehill

I am not acquainted with Grandma Turner. If she is a resident of this city it does not surprise me that she carries disease. I was told this malarial place was to be the Chicago of the Southwest. Well, my little friend, it is not the Chicago of the Southwest. I cannot rightly say what it is, but it has ruined my health as it has my finances.

He drops the paper.

. . . I owe you money.

He works a key in a drawer and takes out money and counts during the following.

Mattie
You have not traded poorly.

Stonehill
Certainly not. I am paying you for a horse I do not possess and have bought back a string of useless ponies I cannot sell again.

Mattie
You are forgetting the gray horse.

Stonehill
Crowbait.

Mattie
You are looking at the thing in the wrong light.

Stonehill
I am looking at it in the light of God's eternal truth.

He hands the money across and Mattie counts to confirm.

Mattie
Your illness is putting you "down in the dumps." You will soon find a buyer for the ponies.

Stonehill
I have a tentative offer of ten dollars per head from the Pfitzer Soap Works of Little Rock.

Mattie
It would be a shame to destroy such spirited horseflesh.

Stonehill
So it would. I am confident the deal will fall through.

Mattie
Look here. I need a pony. I will pay ten dollars for one of them.

Stonehill

No. That was lot price. No no. Wait a minute. Are we trading again? I just handed you twenty dollars each for those ponies and you now propose to buy one back for ten? Little girl: I will give you ten dollars to refrain from doing any more business here. It would be the most astute deal I have struck in Arkansas.

STABLE

We are tracking along a line of stalls toward a small corral holding a black mustang, among other ponies.

Mattie is approaching the horse. A black stablehand has been trailing her, humping her father's saddle.

Mattie

This one is beautiful.

She rubs the muzzle of the black horse.

She takes the saddle from the stablehand and tries to throw it over the horse. She is not tall or strong enough.

The stableboy helps, then helps her up.

The horse does not move for a long beat.

The stableboy is laughing.

Stableboy

He don't know they's a person up there. You too light.

She kicks lightly and the horse abruptly pitches once or twice and then starts prancing.

The stableboy, still laughing, stands in the middle of a circle defined by the prancing horse.

Stableboy

He thinks he got a horsefly on him.

Mattie leans forward to calm the horse, rubbing the muzzle and shushing him.

She straightens.

Mattie
He is very spirited. I will call him "Little Blackie."

Stableboy
Das a good name.

Mattie
What does he like for a treat?

Stableboy
Ma'am, he is a horse, so he likes apples.

She reins the horse around and heads for the door, calling back:

Mattie
Thank Mr. Stonehill for me.

The receding stableboy is uncomfortable.

Stableboy
No ma'am. . . I ain't s'posed to utter your name.

CANVAS FLAP

Whipped up at the cut.

Peering in is Mattie; holding the makeshift curtain open is an elderly Chinese.

Behind them we can see the shelves of a modest grocery store and in the deep background its bright street-facing window.

Chinese
See. Sleep.

Reverse: a squalid living area crowded with effects. It is dim. There is snoring. Rooster Cogburn is in a Chinese rope bed, his weight bowing it almost to the ground.

Mattie steps in.

Mattie
That is fine. I will wake him.

Chinese
Won't like.

Mattie ignores him, poking at Rooster as the grocer withdraws, letting the canvas drop behind him.

Mattie
Mr. Cogburn, it is I. Mattie Ross, your employer.

Rooster
Whuh.

Mattie
How long til you are ready to go?

Rooster opens his eyes, blinks.

Rooster
Go whar?

Mattie
Into the Indian Territory. In pursuit of Tom Chaney.

Rooster
Whah. . .

He focuses on Mattie, swings his legs out, rumbles, and spits on the floor.

. . . Oh.

He reaches over a pouch of tobacco and begins fumbling with cigarette makings.

. . . Chaney. You are the bereaved girl with stories of El Dorado. Mr. Lee! Why are you admitting callers!

A voice from the front of the store:

Grocer
Toad her no good!

Mattie takes out some cash.

Mattie
I said fifty dollars to retrieve Chaney. You did not believe me?

Rooster is sobered by the sight of the currency.

Rooster
Well, I did not know. You are a hard one to figure.

Mattie
How long for you to make ready to depart?

Mattie takes the cigarette fixings at which Rooster is fumbling and works on a cigarette.

Rooster
Well now wait now, sis. I remember your offer but do not remember agreeing to it. If I'm going up against Ned Pepper I will need a hundred dollars. I can tell you that much. Hundred dollars! I am not pursuing his gang through Arkansas, where there is law, and the criminal is out of his element. They are in the Territory, in their element, where there is no law and the marshal stands alone.

He spits again.

. . . Hundred dollars is the right amount. I will take those fifty dollars in advance. There will be expenses.

Mattie
You are trying to take advantage of me.

Rooster
I am giving you the children's rate. I am not a sharper, I am an old man sleeping in a rope bed in a room behind a Chinese grocery. I should burn this damn thing. It is no good for my back, sister. I have nothing.

She hands him the finished cigarette.

Mattie
You want to be kept in whiskey.

Rooster is patting at his chest.

Rooster
I don't have to buy that, I confiscate it. I am an officer of the court.

She lights his cigarette.

. . . Thank you. Hundred dollars. That is the rate.

Mattie
I shall not niggle. Can we depart this afternoon?

Rooster
We?!

The word detonates a fit of coughing.

. . . You are not going. That is no part of it.

Mattie
You misjudge me if you think I am silly enough to give you fifty dollars and simply watch you ride off.

Rooster
I am a bonded U.S. marshal!

Mattie
That weighs but little with me. I will see the thing done.

Rooster
You never said anything about this. I cannot go up against Ned Pepper and a band of hard men and look after a baby at the same time.

Mattie
I am not a baby.

Rooster
I will not be stopping at boarding houses with warm beds and plates of hot grub on the table. It will be traveling fast and eating light. What little sleeping is done will take place on the ground.

Mattie
I have slept out at night. Papa took me and Little Frank coon hunting last summer on the Petit Jean. We were in the woods all night. We sat around a big fire and Yarnell told ghost stories. We had a good time.

Rooster
Coon hunting! This ain't no coon hunt, it don't come within forty miles of being a coon hunt!

Mattie

It is the same idea as a coon hunt. You are just trying to make your work sound harder than it is. Here is the money. I aim to get Tom Chaney and if you are not game I will find somebody who is game. All I have heard out of you so far is talk. I know you can drink whiskey and snore and spit and wallow in filth and bemoan your station. The rest has been braggadocio. They told me you had grit and that is why I came to you. I am not paying for talk. I can get all the talk I need and more at the Monarch Boarding House.

Rooster stares, nonplussed.

He drops back into the rope bed, which sets it swaying. As he stares up at the ceiling:

Rooster

Leave the money. Meet me here tomorrow morning at seven o'clock and we will begin our coon hunt.

GRANDMA TURNER'S ROOM

Mattie makes early-morning preparations to leave as Grandma Turner snores. She unrolls her father's traps and takes out a big-brimmed fisherman's hat and puts it on: too big. She lines it with newspaper, experimenting with the amount until it fits. She puts on his coat, gives the sleeves a big cuff. She examines the Colt's dragoon. She drops apples into a sack.

She finishes by folding a letter she has written and putting it into an envelope. Throughout, we have been hearing its contents in voice-over:

Mattie

Dearest Mother. I am about to embark on a great adventure. Or dare I call it a mission, for shall any of us rest easy ere Papa's death is avenged? My investigations in Fort Smith lead me to believe that Tom Chaney can be found and brought to justice, and I have made arrangements to that end. I will return to you once I have seen them properly carried through. . .

EXTERIOR BOARDING HOUSE

Mattie is cinching her gear onto Little Blackie. She mounts and rides off as the letter ends:

Mattie

But do not worry on my account. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. The author of all things watches over me. And I have a fine horse. Kiss Little Frankie for me and pinch Violet's cheek. I am off for the Choctaw Nation.

INTERIOR GROCERY

Tracking toward Rooster's rope bed. A hat is pulled down over the face of the figure reclining in it. Smoke sifts up from somewhere.

Mattie draws up to the figure with mounting concern. She pulls the hat off. It is the elderly Chinese grocer.

Mattie

Where is Marshal Cogburn!

The grocer reaches a pipe and pulls on it. His manner is dreamy.

Grocer

Went away. . .

Mattie

Away! Where?

The grocer pulls an envelope from underneath his robe and hands it to Mattie. He closes his eyes and drifts away.

Mattie pulls a scrap of paper from the envelope and reads:

Mattie

Here inside is a train ticket for your return home. Use it. By the time you read this I will be across the river in the Indian nation. Pursuit would be futile. I will return with your man Chaney. Leave me to my work. Reuben Cogburn.

Mattie's jaw tightens. She abruptly crumples the paper.

RIVER

Mattie gallops down an embankment to a river of some width. At the near-side ferry

station a raft enclosed by railing waits, its guide rope strung across the river. A pilot idles on the near shore.

On the far shore two small figures, mounted, ascend the opposite bank. Mattie draws up in front of the ferryman at the edge of the river.

Mattie
Is that Marshal Cogburn?

Ferryman
That is the man.

Mattie
Who's he with?

Ferryman
I do not know.

Mattie
Take me across.

He reaches for the reins of her horse.

Ferryman
So you're the runaway. Marshal told me you'd show up. I'm to present you to the sheriff.

Mattie
That is a story. Let go my horse. I have business across the river.

The ferryman is leading Little Blackie back up the hill toward the town. Mattie cranes around to look at the two small figures across the river. They have twisted in their saddles to look back.

. . . Look Slim, if you don't turn around and take me across you may find yourself in court where you don't want to be. I have a good lawyer.

Ferryman
Name ain't Slim.

She looks at the dull man's unresponsive back. She twists to look across the river.

The two mounted figures are breaking their look back and resuming their climb up the

bank.

Mattie draws an apple from the bag slung round the saddlehorn and pegs it, hard as she can, at the ferryman.

It hits him square in the back of the head. He reacts, reaching to his head and dropping the reins.

Mattie has already leaned forward for the reins and sweeps them back. She saws Little Blackie around and sends him galloping for the river.

Mattie

Run, Little Blackie!

Ferryman

Hey!

She urges the horse, at the gallop, into the river.

The splashing and shouts have again drawn the attention of the two men across the river.

As the horse goes further into the river its up-and-down gait slows, the water offering resistance.

The ferryman has run down to the bank. He stoops for a rock and throws it. It misses by a mile.

Little Blackie leaves riverbottom and starts swimming.

The two men across the river, having twisted to look, now rein their horses round to face the action. But they do not advance. They rest forearms on pommels and watch.

Little Blackie is being carried downstream as he swims against a swift current.

Mattie

Good, Little Blackie!

Little Blackie's head dips as he finds his feet again. He slogs laboriously to what is now the nearer shore.

The two men up the bank impassively watch.

The horse and Mattie emerge fully from the river, dripping.

Mattie taps heels against Little Blackie's flanks and walks him slowly up the bank. She

stops many yards short of the two men—Rooster and LeBoeuf.

A silent standoff as Little Blackie breathes heavily. The two expressionless men still have not stirred.

At length:

Rooster
That's quite a horse.

A long pause.

. . . I will give you ten dollars for him.

Mattie
From the money you stole from me?

Rooster
That was not stolen. I'm out for your man.

Mattie
I was to accompany you. If I do not, there is no agreement and my money was stolen.

Rooster licks his lips, thinking.

LeBoeuf
Marshal, put this child back on the ferry. We have a long road, and time is a-wasting.

Mattie
If I go back, it is to the office of the U.S. marshals to report the theft of my money. And futile, Marshal Cogburn—"Pursuit would be futile"?—is not spelt f-u-d-e-l.

A heavy silence as Cogburn stares at her.

LeBoeuf looks between the two, waiting for Rooster to take action. Gathering that he will not, LeBoeuf slides off his horse.

Mattie watches as he walks to Little Blackie, holding up a gentling hand for the horse to sniff at and nuzzle.

He abruptly swipes the reins with one hand and with the other grabs Mattie's ankle. He pushes momentarily to unstirrup the foot and then pulls hard, tumbling Mattie to the

ground.

LeBoeuf
Little sister, it is time for your spanking.

He begins to spank her.

Mattie
Help me, Marshal!

Rooster sits impassively on his horse.

LeBoeuf
(still spanking)
Now you do as the grown-ups say! Or I will get myself a birch switch and stripe your leg!

Mattie is struggling and in spite of herself starts to weep. LeBoeuf drags her through the dirt to a mesquite bush and snaps off a switch.

LeBoeuf
Now we will see what tune you sing!

Mattie, wet and filthy, tries vainly to swat back. Rooster still watches without expression as LeBoeuf whips the girl.

Mattie
Are you going to let him do this, Marshal?

Finally, quietly:

Rooster
No, I don't believe I will. Put your switch away, LeBoeuf. She has got the best of us.

LeBoeuf looks back, for a moment too surprised to speak. He then regains his resolve:

LeBoeuf
She has not got the best of me!

He returns to the beating.

Rooster
(evenly)
Did you not hear me? That will do, I said.

LeBoeuf
I aim to finish what I started.

Rooster
That will be the biggest mistake you ever made, you Texas brush-popper.

The sound of a gun being cocked.

LeBoeuf leaves off the beating to stare at Rooster—whose gun is drawn, cocked, and pointed at him.

LeBoeuf flings the switch aside and stalks to his horse. He mutters, but loud enough to be heard:

LeBoeuf
Hoorawed by a little girl.

CAMPFIRE

Mattie sits looking into the fire, hands clasped around her knees.

LeBoeuf sits feet to the fire, smoking a pipe that, with his boyish face, makes him look as if he is playing at professor. He gazes into the fire, musing as he pulls at the pipe.

LeBoeuf
I am not accustomed to so large a fire. In Texas, we will make do with a fire of little more than twigs or buffalo chips to heat the night's ration of beans.

Rooster enters the circle of light with an armload of wood.

. . . And, it is Ranger policy never to make your camp in the same place as your cookfire. Very imprudent to make your presence known in unsettled country.

Rooster gazes at LeBoeuf for a beat, then dumps the wood onto the fire.

He leaves the circle of light.

LeBoeuf addresses the darkness that Rooster has disappeared into:

. . . How do you know that Bagby will have intelligence?

Rooster

He has a store.

He reenters with a length of rope, and a robe which he unrolls onto the ground.

LeBoeuf

A store. That makes him an authority on movements in the Territory?

Rooster plays out one end of the rope to just touch the ground, then starts playing out the rest as he paces.

Rooster

We have entered a wild place. Anyone coming in, wanting any kind of supply, cannot pick and choose his portal.

He has finished making a loop around his sleeping robe. Seeing this, LeBoeuf laughs.

LeBoeuf

That is a piece of foolishness. All the snakes are asleep this time of year.

As he leaves the circle of light:

Rooster

They have been known to wake up.

Mattie

Let me have a rope too.

Rooster

A snake would not bother you.

He reenters with a bottle and settles down on his robe.

. . . You are too little and bony. Before you sleep you should fetch water for the morning and put it by the fire. The creek'll ice over tonight.

Mattie

I am not going down there again. If you want any more water you can fetch it yourself.

Rooster
Everyone in my party must do his job.

LeBoeuf
You are lucky to be traveling in a place where a spring is so handy. In my country you can ride for days and see no ground water. I have lapped filthy water from a hoofprint and was glad to have it.

Rooster
If I ever meet one of you Texas waddies that says he never drank water from a horse track I think I will shake his hand and give him a Daniel Webster cigar.

LeBoeuf
You don't believe it?

Rooster
I believed it the first twenty-five times I heard it. Maybe it is true. Maybe lapping water off the ground is Ranger policy.

LeBoeuf
You are getting ready to show your ignorance now, Cogburn. I don't mind a little personal chaffing but I won't hear anything against the Ranger troop from a man like you.

Rooster
How long have you boys been mounted on sheep down there?

LeBoeuf leaps angrily to his feet.

LeBoeuf
My shaggy horse will be galloping when that big American stud of yours is winded and collapsed. Now make another joke about it. You are only trying to put on a show for this girl Mattie with what you must think is a keen tongue.

Rooster
This is like women talking.

LeBoeuf
Yes, that is the way! Make me out foolish in this girl's eyes.

Rooster
I think she has got you pretty well figured.

Silence. Crackling fire.

Mattie
Would you two like to hear the story of "The Midnight Caller"? One of you will have to be "The Caller." I will tell you what to say. I will do all the other parts myself.

LeBoeuf continues to glare at Rooster, breathing heavily.

Rooster, with a loud flap, whips the robe over himself.

DAWN

We are close on Mattie's upturned face. Snowflakes are drifting down onto it and melting. Mattie's eyes blink open.

Rooster is already at his horse, packing it. LeBoeuf is not in evidence.

Mattie rises.

Mattie
Good morning, Marshal.

Rooster
(eyes on his work)
Morning.

Mattie
Where is Mr. LeBoeuf?

A toss of his head:

Rooster
Down the hill. Performing his necessaries.

Mattie
Marshal Cogburn, I welcome the chance for a private parley. I gather that you and Mr. LeBoeuf have come to some sort of agreement. As your employer I believe I have a right to know the particulars.

Rooster

The particulars is that we bring Chaney in to the magistrate in San Saba Texas where they have a considerable reward on offer. Which we split.

Mattie

I did not want him brought to Texas, to have Texas punishment administered for a Texas crime. That was not our agreement.

Rooster gives a vicious tug on the cinchrope.

Rooster

What you want is to have him caught and punished.

Mattie

I want him to know he is being punished for killing my father.

Rooster turns to her.

Rooster

You can let him know that. You can tell him to his face. You can spit on him and make him eat sand out of the road. I will hold him down. If you want I will flay the flesh off the soles of his feet and find you an Indian pepper to rub into the wound. Isn't that a hundred dollars' value?

Mattie

It is not. When I have bought and paid for something I will have my way. Why do you think I am paying you if not to have my way?

Rooster

It is time for you to learn you cannot have your way in every little particular. Other people have their interests.

We hear spurs jingling.

. . . I am a free agent. If you find I fail to satisfy your terms I will return your money at the end of this expedition.

Mattie

Little Blackie and I are riding back to the U.S. marshals' office. This is fraud.

Rooster

God damn it!

LeBoeuf has appeared.

LeBoeuf

What's going on?

Rooster

(testy)

This is a business conversation.

LeBoeuf

Is that what you call it. It sounds to me like you are still being hoorawed by a little girl.

Rooster

Did you say hooraw!

LeBoeuf

That was the word.

Rooster

I will show you hooraw!

Mattie

There is no hoorawing in it. My agreement with the Marshal antedates yours. It has the force of law.

LeBoeuf

(amused)

The force of law! This man is a notorious thumper! He rode by the light of the moon with Quantrill and Bloody Bill Anderson!

Rooster

Those men was patriots, Texas trash!

LeBoeuf

They murdered women and children in Lawrence, Kansas.

Rooster

I have heard that too. It is a damned lie! What army was <u>you</u> in, mister?

LeBoeuf
I was at Shreveport first with Kirby-Smith—

Rooster
What side was you on?

LeBoeuf
I was in the army of Northern Virginia, Cogburn, and I don't have to hang my head when I say it!

Rooster
If you had served with Captain Quantrill—

LeBoeuf
Captain Quantrill indeed!

Rooster
You had best let this go, LeBoeuf!

LeBoeuf
Captain of what!

Rooster
Good, then! There are not sufficient dollars in the state of Texas to make it worth my while to listen to your opinions, day and night. Our agreement is nullified—it's each man for himself!

LeBoeuf is already mounting his shaggy horse.

LeBoeuf
That suits me!

He saws the horse around.

. . . Congratulations, Cogburn. You have graduated from marauder to wetnurse. Adios!

LeBoeuf gallops off with the thunder of hoofs and the jingle of spurs, and Rooster, seething, turns back to his work.

As the hoofbeats recede, Mattie sounds a note of regret:

Mattie
We don't need him, do we Marshal?

Rooster
(muttering)
We'll miss his Sharp's carbine. It's apt to get lively out here.

EXTERIOR BAGBY'S STORE

A mule is pulling back on a cotton rope round his neck that is tied off to the porch of the ramshackle store. The beast is strangling as the rope is too tight, and he is being poked with sticks by two motley-dressed Indian boys up on the porch.

Rooster enters and cuts the rope. The mule brays and canters off, shaking its head, rope dangling.

Indian Youth
Hey.

Rooster is already mounting the steps to the porch.

Rooster
Call that sport, do ya?

He kicks the first youth hard in the ass, sending him sprawling off the porch into the dirt. The second backs against the railing and Rooster shoves him in the chest so that he flips backward to also land in the dirt.

Rooster
Stay here sister. I will see Bagby.

Mattie, astride Little Blackie, holds the reins of Cogburn's horse. As he disappears inside the two youths climb back onto the porch. They sit at the lip, feet dangling, and stare sullenly at Mattie. She stares back.

MINUTES LATER

The youths have not moved. The door bangs open and Rooster emerges.

Mattie
Has Chaney been here?

Rooster

No.

Crossing back he kicks one of the boys off the porch into the dirt again. The other youth scampers out of footreach. Rooster starts down the stairs.

Rooster

But Coke Hayes was, two days ago. Coke runs with Lucky Ned. He bought supplies, with this.

With a *ching* he flips a coin to Mattie. She inspects it: gold, square, with a +-shaped cut-out in the middle.

Mattie

This is Papa's gold piece! Tom Chaney, here we come!

Rooster

It is not the world's only California gold piece.

Mattie

They are rare, here.

Rooster

They are rare. But if it is Chaney's, it could just as easily mean that Lucky Ned and his gang fell upon him, as that he fell in with them. Chaney could be a corpse. These are a rough lot.

Mattie

That would be a bitter disappointment, Marshal. What do we do?

Rooster mounts up.

Rooster

We pursue. Ned is unfinished business for the marshals anyhow, and when we have him we will also have Chaney —or we can learn the whereabouts of his body. Bagby doesn't know which way they went, but now we know they come through here, they couldn't be going but one of two ways: north toward the Winding Stair Mountains, or pushing on further west. I suspect north. There is more to rob.

The youth who was kicked into the dirt is dusting himself off. He has been listening without interest.

Youth
Mr. Ferrington will want to know who cut loose his mule.

Rooster reins his horse around to go.

Rooster
Tell him it was Mr. James, a bank examiner from Clay County, Missouri.

Youth
The James boys is said to be slight, Frank and Jesse both.

Rooster
One of them has grown fat. The mule will not range far. You boys mend your ways or I will return some dark night and cut off one of your heads—I do not say which—and leave it on the stomach of the other as a warning.

RIDING

Rooster and Mattie ride abreast along a barely defined road.

Rooster
Potter and I served with him at Elkhorn Tavern. Even latterly our activities was by and large martial. We did though, one time, run across a Yankee paymaster and relieve him of four thousand dollars in gold coin. Squealed like it was his own money. Well, since hostilities was officially ended it was technically criminal so Potter rode down to Arkansas and I went to Cairo Illinois with my share, started calling myself Burroughs and opened an eating place called The Green Frog. I married a grass widow but my drinking picked up and my wife did not like the company of my river friends. She decided to go back to her first husband, a clerk in a hardware store. She said, "Goodbye, Reuben, a love for decency does not abide in you." I told her, "Goodbye, Nola, I hope that little nail-selling bastard will make you happy this time." She took my boy with her too. He never did like me anyhow. I guess I did speak awful rough to him but I did not mean nothing by it. You would not want to see a clumsier child than Horace. I bet he broke forty cups. . .

He frowns and draws up, looking at something. Mattie follows his look.

A man is hanging in a tree—very high, perhaps thirty feet off the ground. The body slowly twists. The head seems unnaturally large.

Rooster

Hey!

At Rooster's shout something separates from the head: we have been looking at not just the corpse's silhouette but that of a large carrion-eating bird as well, perched on the corpse's shoulder and feeding at the corpse's face. The bird flaps clumsily off.

Rooster gazes at the strung-up body.

Rooster

Is it Chaney?

Mattie

I would not recognize the soles of his feet.

Rooster gets off his horse, pulls a knife from his gear, and ambles to the tree. Mattie follows.

When she arrives Rooster has started sawing at the rope that ties the body off, wrapped around a chest-high branch stump. Mattie looks up.

She is looking mostly at soles of feet as the foreshortened body twists slowly, high above.

Rooster

Step back now.

She does. Rooster steps back as well as the almost-cut-through rope starts to unravel by itself, crazily twisting under the pressure and gently spinning the body above.

The rope snaps. It yanks violently upward, slapping branches.

The body drops—perhaps four feet—and jerks to a stop, jacknifing and dancing.

Rooster

God damn it.

They both gaze up at the body.

Rooster

Snagged. Well you are going to have to clamber on up with this knife. I am too old and too fat.

UP IN THE TREE

Mattie is well up.

We hear Rooster's voice from below:

Rooster

It had one billiard table, served ladies and men both but mostly men. I tried to run it myself a while but I couldn't keep good help and I never did learn how to buy meat. I was like a man fighting bees. Finally I give up and solt it and went out to see the country.

Mattie pauses, looking down.

We are over her. Rooster is foreshortened, a long way down, looking up, smoking a cigarette. He reacts to her look down:

Rooster

You are doing well.

She looks up, down again, and then proceeds. Rooster continues as well:

. . . That was when I went out to the staked plains of Texas and shot buffalo with Vernon Shaftoe and a Flathead Indian called Olly.

Mattie stretches onto tiptoes, reaches, just gets fingers around a branch. She secures it enough with the one hand to dare to reach with the other. She hauls herself up.

. . . The Mormons had run Shaftoe out of Great Salt Lake City but don't ask me what it was for. Call it a misunderstanding and let it go at that. There is no use in you asking me questions about it, for I will not answer them.

Mattie looks out, at waist-height to the corpse, which twists maybe eight feet away over the void. Rooster notes her look:

. . . Is it our man?

The face is half-eaten and eyeless.

Mattie

I believe not.

She moves to start back down, but Rooster calls:

Rooster

No! Cut him down!

Mattie

Why?

Rooster

I might know him.

She climbs one more branch to arrive at the hanging branch. She shimmies out onto it and pulls the knife from Rooster's belt now around her waist.

. . . You see, Olly and me both taken a solemn oath to keep silent. Well sir, the big shaggies is about all gone. It is a damned shame.

Mattie looks down, over the shoulder of the close-by foreshortened corpse to the far foreshortened Rooster.

. . . I would give three dollars right now for a pickled buffalo tongue.

She calls out as she starts sawing:

Mattie

Why did they hang him so high?

Rooster

I don't know. Possibly in the belief it would make him more dead.

The sawing continues.

Rooster takes one step back.

The rope snaps. At once:

The body drops.

The branch, unburdened, bucks with Mattie atop it.

She gasps, hugging at the branch, getting swung halfway around it but then righting herself.

The body hits the ground with a smack.

Mattie looks.

The body is spread out on the ground below, many bones now broken, its posture absurd.

Rooster steps forward. He toes the upper body to get a view of the face. Barely audible:

Rooster
I do not know this man.

He reacts to something, looking up the road in the direction of their heading.

Mattie looks out. Partly obscured by intervening foliage, an oncoming rider. His pace is unhurried.

Down on the ground Rooster turns to face the rider—an Indian with a long-bore rifle balanced sideways across the pommel of his saddle. He wears a tattered Union Army jacket, crossed bandoliers of rifle shells and a black homburg hat with a feather in its brim.

Rooster drops his hand to his gun as the rider approaches.

Mattie looks down at the foreshortened rider pulling up under the tree. She hears a greeting and a mostly inaudible exchange.

After some back-and-forth the Indian dismounts. The men stoop at either end of the corpse. Rooster grabs wrists, the Indian, ankles. They lift.

Mattie frowns. She starts to move.

A MINUTE LATER

Mattie finishes climbing down.

Rooster is just returning from the road to their two horses by the tree. The Indian, with the corpse slung over the rump of his horse, is resuming his trip in the direction from which Rooster and Mattie came.

Mattie
He knew the hanged man?

Rooster mounts.

Rooster
He did not. But it is a dead body, possibly worth something in trade.

He looks up at the sky as snowflakes start to sift down.

RIDING

It is snowing lightly. Rooster and Mattie are clomping through a stream.

Rooster
She had taken a notion she wanted me to be a lawyer. Bought a heavy book called *Daniels on Negotiable Instruments* and set me to reading it. Never could get a grip on it and I was happy enough to set it aside and leave Texas. There ain't but about six trees between there and Canada, and nothing else grows but has stickers on it. I went to—

A distant gunshot.

Rooster stops. He twists to look behind.

A listening beat. At length:

Rooster
I knew it.

Mattie
Knew what?

Rooster
We're being followed. I asked the Indian to signal with a shot if there was someone on our trail.

Mattie
Should we be concerned, Marshal?

Rooster
No. It's Mr. LeBoeuf, using us as bird dogs in hopes of cutting in once we've flushed the prey. Our Texas friend has got just enough sense to recognize he can't outtrack me.

Mattie thinks.

Mattie
Perhaps we could double back over our tracks, and confuse the trail in a clever way.

Rooster
No, we will wait right here and offer our friend a warm hello, and ask him where he is going.

MINUTES LATER

Rooster waits, sitting casually astride his horse in the middle of the road. Snow continues to fall.

A jingling noise up the road.

Movement: an advancing rider seen through the foliage that masks a bend in the road.

Rooster straightens.

The oncoming rider rounds the bend.

He approaches: a white man with big whiskers, his horse leading a packhorse loaded with clinking and jangling sundries. Draped on his own horse's rump is the hanged man's body.

The stranger wears a fierce bear head as hat. The rest of the bearskin trails down his body as robe.

He advances unhurriedly towards Rooster. At a few yards' distance he draws up, content to sit his horse and solemnly return Rooster's stare.

At length:

Rooster
You are not LeBoeuf.

Bear Man
My name is Forster. I practice dentistry in the Nation. Also, veterinary arts. And medicine, on those humans that will sit still for it.

Rooster
(indicating corpse)
You have your work cut out for you there.

Bear Man
Traded for him with an Indian, who said he came by him honestly. I gave up two dental mirrors and a bottle of expectorant. *(beat)* Do either of you need medical attention?

Rooster
No.

Rooster straightens as if to rein his horse around but stops with a thought:

. . . It is fixing to get cold. Do you know of any place to take shelter?

Bear Man
I have my bearskin. You might want to head to the Original Greaser Bob's. He notched a dugout into a hollow along the Carrillon River. If you ride the river you won't fail to see it. Greaser Bob—Original Greaser Bob—is hunting north of the picket wire and would not begrudge its use.

A pause.

The Bear Man tilts his head to indicate the corpse behind him.

Bear Man
I have taken his teeth. I will entertain an offer for the rest of him.

NIGHT

A point-of-view looking down on a thrown-together cabin dug into the flanks of a ravine. Its roof meets hillside at the rear. Smoke is coming out of a rough chimney.

Rooster and Mattie have paused at the crest of the rise above the dugout to look. Rooster shrugs out of his coat.

Rooster
Take my jacket. Creep onto the roof. If they are not friendly I will give you a sign to damp the chimney.

As Mattie descends to where hillside meets structure Rooster takes his rifle and walks around to the front door—crude planking hung on leather-strap hinges. His footsteps crunch in the snow.

The door is yanked open, inches, and a backlit face appears over a hand holding a revolver. Rooster halts.

Man
Who is out there?

Rooster
We are looking for shelter.

Man
No room for you here! Ride on!

The door slams.

After a moment the light inside goes out.

Mattie, arriving on the roof, looks steeply down on Rooster. He glances up, thinking. He does not sign. He looks back at the door.

Rooster
Who all is in there?

Voice
Ride on!

Rooster looks up at Mattie. He nods.

She balls the jacket and stuffs it into the chimney.

Rooster takes ten paces to one side of the door and then kneels in the snow, raising his rifle.

Long beat.

Muffled coughs from inside the house—more than one person.

Activity inside—yelling—the hiss of fire being doused. Suddenly:

The door flies open and—BANG! BANG!—two shotgun blasts.

Slightest beat as Mattie peers into the yard, and then—BANG!—shot rips through the roof just at her feet.

A rifle blast—from Rooster. A yelp of pain from inside.

Rooster
I am a Federal officer! Who is in there? Speak up and be quick about it.

New Voice
A Methodist and a son-of-a-bitch!

Rooster cocks his head.

Rooster
Is that Emmett Quincy?

New Voice
I don't know any Emmett Quincy.

Rooster
Listen here, Emmett Quincy. I know it is you! This is Rooster Cogburn. Columbus Potter and five other marshals is out here with me. We have got a bucket of coal oil. In one minute we will burn you out from both ends! Chuck your arms clear and come out with your hands locked on your head and you will not be harmed. Oncet that coal oil goes down the chimney we are killing everything that comes out the door!

Thinking beat.

Quincy
There's only two of you!

Rooster
You go ahead and bet your life on it! How many of you is in there?

Quincy
Me and Moon, but he is hit! He can't walk!

Rooster
Drag him out! Light that lamp!

Thinking beat.

Quincy
Tell them other officers to be careful with their guns! We are coming out!

The door opens again. From the smoky black a shotgun and two revolvers are tossed out. Then, orange light: a lamp is lit. Two men emerge, one limping and holding onto the other, who holds high the lamp.

Rooster
Down in the snow! Lie still while I cuff you! We is only two, but my man on the roof will shoot you if you get feisty.

INSIDE

Rooster has coaxed the fire back to life. He peers into the large pot hanging over it.

The cuffed men sit side-by-side on a plank bench behind a plank table, staring at Mattie. Moon's leg is bound with a large blue handkerchief.

Quincy sounds resentful:

Quincy
You said it was a man on the roof. I thought it was Potter.

Rooster
You was always dumb, Quincy, and remain true to form.

He stirs the pot with a wooden spoon.

. . .This here's an awful lot of sofky. Was you boys looking for company?

Quincy
That is our supper and breakfast both. I like a big breakfast.

Moon nods agreement, but has a different thought:

Moon
Sofky always cooks up bigger than you think.

Rooster, continuing to nose around, pushes the canvas cover off a crate of bottles.

Rooster
And a good store of whiskey as well. What are you boys up to, outside of cooking banquets? You are way too jumpy.

Quincy
We didn't know who was out there weather like this. It might have been some crazy man. Anyone can say he is a marshal.

Moon
My leg hurts.

Rooster
I'll bet it does. When is the last time you seen your old pard Ned Pepper?

Quincy
Ned Pepper? I don't know him. Who is he?

Rooster spoons sofky from the pot into a bowl

Rooster
I'm surprised you don't remember him. He is a little fellow, nervous and quick. His lip is all messed up.

Quincy
That don't bring anybody to mind.

Rooster sits across from the men with his bowlful of sofky and starts eating.

Rooster
There is a new boy that might be running with Ned. He is short himself and he has got a powder mark on his face, a black place. He calls himself Chaney, or Chelmsford sometimes. Carries a Henry rifle.

Quincy
That don't bring anybody to mind. Black mark, I would remember that.

Rooster
You don't remember anything I want to know, do you Quincy? I hope you don't mind. . .

Raises a spoonful.

. . . There seems to be ample. What do you know, Moon?

Moon looks at Quincy, who gives a hard look back.

Moon
I don't know those boys. I always try to help out the law.

Rooster
By the time we get back to Fort Smith that leg will be swelled up tight as Dick's hatband. It will be mortified and they will cut it off. Then if you live I will get you two or three years in the Federal house up in Detroit.

Moon
You are trying to get at me.

Rooster
They will teach you to read and write up there but the rest of it won't be so good. Them boys can be hard on a gimp.

Moon
You are trying to get at me.

Rooster
You give me some good information on Ned and I will take you to McAlester's store tomorrow get that ball taken out of your leg. Then I will give you three days to clear the Territory.

Quincy
We don't know those boys you are looking for.

Rooster shrugs at Moon.

Rooster
It ain't his leg.

Quincy
Don't go to flapping your mouth, Moon. It is best to let me do the talking.

Moon
I would say if I knew. . .

Quincy

We are weary trappers.

He reacts to Mattie, staring at him.

. . . Who worked you over with the ugly stick?

Mattie's look shifts to Moon.

Mattie

The man Chaney with the marked face killed my father. He was a whiskey drinker like you and it led to killing in the end. If you answer the marshal's questions he will help you. I have a good lawyer at home and he will help you too.

Beat.

Moon

I am puzzled by this. *(to Rooster)* Why is she here?

Quincy

Don't go jawing with these people, Moon. Don't go jawing with that runt.

Mattie

(to Quincy)

I don't like you. I hope you go to jail. My lawyer will not help you.

Moon

My leg is giving me fits.

Rooster

Yes, a young fellow like you don't want to loose his leg. You are too young to be getting about on a willow peg. You love dancing and sport, carrying on.

Quincy

Easy now. He is trying to get at you.

Rooster

I am getting at you with the truth.

Moon

We seen Ned and Haze two days ago. We's supposed—

Quincy
Don't act the fool! If you blow I will kill you!

Moon
I am played out. I must have a doctor. We's supposed—

Quincy jerks up one knee, banging the bottom of the table and sloshing Rooster's sofky as he grabs something from his boot: a knife.

He slams it down on Moon's cuffed hand, chopping off four fingers. They fly like chips from a log.

As Moon screams Rooster mutters:

Rooster
God damn it!

Quincy flips the knife lightly in the air and regrabs it with blade pointing opposite-wise. He twists and rears with cuffed hands to plunge the knife into Moon's chest.

Rooster has his gun out now and fires.

Quincy jerks back, hit in the face. Blood spatters Mattie. Quincy, still seated, slides awkwardly down the wall.

Moon has fallen to the floor, knife in chest.

Moon
Oh lord, I am dying!

Rooster and Mattie stand over him.

. . . Do something! Help me!

Rooster
I can do nothing for you, son. Your pard has killed you and I have done for him.

Moon
Don't leave me lying here! Don't let the wolves rip me up!

Rooster
I'll see you are buried right. You tell me about Ned. Where did you see him?

Moon
Two days ago at McAlester's store. They are coming here tonight to get remounts, and sofky. They just robbed the Katy Flyer at Wagoner's Switch if the snow didn't stop 'em.

Eyes wide, he gazes down his body.

. . . I am bleeding buckets! I am gone. Send the news to my brother, George Garrett. He is a Methodist circuit rider in South Texas. You can write care of the district supervisor in Austin.

Rooster
Should I tell him you was outlawed up?

Moon
It don't matter, he knows I am on the scout. I will meet him later walking the streets of Glory!

Rooster
Don't be looking for Quincy.

OUTSIDE

Mattie's point-of-view: the dark shoulders of the wooded hills, funneling down to the ravine. It is all very still except for falling snow.

Mattie stands outside the cabin door, hugging herself, keeping watch.

The door opens and Rooster emerges.

Rooster
Hobble our mounts in the corral out back. We don't know when they's coming.

From the threshold he surveys the inside of the cabin.

Mattie
Is he dead?

Rooster
He is. I stowed the bodies under the blanket there. Just needs to look right enough to get 'em in the door.

Something he sees inside prompts Rooster to quickly reenter the cabin. He reemerges, fist closed on something.

> . . . We'll climb that ridge there, fort up somewhere gives us a clear shot.

He flings, and whatever he was holding lands faintly pit-a-pat in the woods.

Mattie

What was that?

Rooster

Fingers.

RIDGE

Rooster finishes hunkering down.

He takes out his revolver and put a cartridge into the one empty chamber, under the hammer. He places the revolver on a log and puts the sack of cartridges next to the revolver. He leans his rifle against the log. He looks out.

His point-of-view of the cabin below, peaceful, smoke drifting from the chimney.

Mattie

What do we do now?

Rooster takes out a sack of corn dodgers and starts to eat.

Rooster

We wait. They ride up, what we want is to get them all in the dugout. I will kill the last one to go in and then we will have them in a barrel.

Mattie

You will shoot him in the back?

Rooster

It will give them to know our intentions is serious. Then I will call down and see if they will be taken alive. If they won't I will shoot them as they come out. I am hopeful that three of their party being dead will take the starch out of them.

Chewing beat.

Mattie

You display great poise.

Rooster

It is just a turkey shoot. There was one time in New Mexico, when Bo was a strong colt and I myself had less tarnish, we was being pursued by seven men. I turned Bo around and taken the reins in my teeth and rode right at them boys firing them two navy sixes I carry on my saddle. Well I guess they was all married men who loved their families as they scattered and run for home.

Mattie

That is hard to believe.

Rooster

What is?

Mattie

One man riding at seven.

Rooster

It is true enough. You go for a man hard enough and fast enough and he don't have time to think about how many is with him—he thinks about himself and how he may get clear of the wrath that is about to set down on him.

Mattie

Why were they pursuing you?

Rooster

They was in the nature of a posse.

Mattie

You were <u>particeps</u> <u>criminis</u> in something other than the case of the Yankee paymaster?

Rooster

I robbed a high-interest bank. You can't rob a thief, can you? I never robbed a citizen. Never took a man's watch.

Mattie

It is all stealing.

Rooster

That is the position they took in New Mexico.

He is suddenly alert, and raises a hand for quiet.

There is the sound of a rider, approaching slowly.

Rooster is puzzled:

. . . One man. I didn't figure them to send a scout.

Their high point-of-view: a mounted figure has entered the ravine.

He travels its length and stops his horse before the cabin and dismounts. We hear the jingle of spurs.

. . . Damn. It is LeBoeuf.

Distant, calling toward the cabin:

LeBoeuf

Hello?

LeBoeuf unholsters a gun. He walks to the cabin, opens the door and peers in.

Rooster starts to rise, about to call out, as LeBoeuf enters and closes the door.

We hear hoofbeats. Many horses.

Mattie

We have to warn him, Marshal!

Rooster is looking to the mouth of the ravine.

Rooster

Too late.

Mattie follows his look.

Their high point-of-view: four riders just entering the ravine.

They look back to the cabin.

From inside, faintly:

LeBoeuf
Oh!

The door opens and LeBoeuf stumbles out, wide-eyed.

He sees the approaching riders. They see him.

They slow, approaching with caution.

LeBoeuf looks at them, glances back over his shoulder, looks forward again.

Mattie
What do we do, Marshal?

Rooster
We sit. What does he do?

The riders stop several paces from LeBoeuf. They spread in a line facing him. Words are exchanged; we cannot make them out.

LeBoeuf unholsters a gun and points it at the four men.

Rooster
He is a fine one for not drawing attention to himself.

The four men, slouched astride their horses, are not impressed by LeBoeuf's gun. There is more talking.

Rooster
Him in the woolly chaps is Lucky Ned.

He refers to the mounted man who does most of the talking. Lucky Ned now speaks to the men on either side and the two corners advance, closing a circle around LeBoeuf.

LeBoeuf looks warily from side side, swinging his gun to cover the group. None of the riders bothers to unholster a gun.

The man to LeBoeuf's right lifts a rope off his saddle and casually twirls it.

The man to his left says something: LeBoeuf looks left and the man to his right drops the rope around LeBoeuf and pulls it tight. LeBoeuf is jerked off his feet, gun dropping. The mounted man backs his horse, taking the play from the rope. He dallies the free end round

his saddlehorn.

Two of the men slide off their horses.

One of them heads for the cabin door.

Rooster

Well, that's that.

BANG!—the rifleshot, just at Mattie's ear, is deafening.

The man heading to the cabin drops, shot in the back.

The two horses that are now riderless rear and mill, panicked.

The horse towing LeBoeuf also skitters, spooked, as its rider looks wildly about and starts shooting.

Lucky Ned looks toward our vantage point and also begins firing.

Rooster is methodically aiming and firing but in the commotion below his first couple of shots don't tell. His third drops Lucky Ned's horse.

The other unmounted man is frantically trying to snatch up the reins of one of the loose horses.

The man towing LeBoeuf spurs his horse toward one of the free horses, trying to grab it. LeBoeuf is dragged past plunging horses' hooves.

A cacaphony of screaming horses, crackling gunfire from the basin, and the boom of Rooster's rifle.

The unmounted man has managed to grab a halter. He climbs with difficulty aboard the skittish horse.

The rider towing LeBoeuf cuts loose the towline. He gallops toward Ned Pepper with an arm outstretched to help him aboard.

Rooster is tracking him with his rifle.

Lucky Ned grabs the extended arm. As he begins to swing up there is the BOOM of Rooster's rifle. The rider pitches off the horse but Lucky Ned manages to stay on, and swipes up the reins. He gallops off.

The one other surviving horseman follows him.

There is one dead horse in the basin, a live unmounted horse racing crazy circles, and three still bodies. One is LeBoeuf's.

Rooster rises.

Rooster
Well that didn't pan out.

IN THE BASIN

LeBoeuf is moaning.

Rooster walks toward him trailed by Mattie, glancing along the way at the two dead men.

Rooster
You managed to put a kink in my rope, pardner.

LeBoeuf
I am theverely injured.

Something is wrong with LeBoeuf's speech. Bloody saliva bubbles copiously from his mouth.

Rooster
Yes you got drug some.

LeBoeuf
Altho shshot. By a rifle.

Rooster stoops to examine.

Rooster
That is quite possible. The scheme did not develop as I had planned. You have been shot in the shoulder but the ball passed through. It will pain you in the years to come. What happened to your mouth?

LeBoeuf
I believe I beh mythelf.

Rooster slaps lightly down at LeBoeuf's chin, signaling that he should open up.

LeBoeuf does, and Rooster digs in with two dirty fingers, dipping his head to peer in as he

pokes this way and that.

Rooster

Couple of teeth missing and yes, the tongue is bit almost through. Do you want to see if it will knit or should I just yank it free? I know a teamster who bit his tongue off being thrown from a horse. After a time he learned to make himself more or less understood.

LeBoeuf

Hngnickh.

Bloody saliva bubbles out with the word. Rooster withdraws his fingers.

Rooster

What's that now?

LeBoeuf

Knit.

Rooster

Very well. It is impossible to bind a tongue wound. The shoulder we will kit out.

Mattie goes to inspect the two outlaws' corpses as Rooster pokes back LeBoeuf's shirt to look at the wound.

. . . It's too bad. We just ran across a doctor of sorts but I do not know where he was headed.

LeBoeuf

I thaw him too. Ith how I came to be here.

Mattie

Neither of these men are Chaney, Marshal.

Rooster

I know it. I know them both. The ugly one is Coke Hayes. Him uglier still is Clement Parmalee. Parmalee and his brothers have a silver claim in the Winding Stair Mountains and I will bet you that's where Lucky Ned's gang is waiting. We'll sleep here, follow in the morning.

Mattie

We promised to bury the poor soul inside.

Rooster
Ground is too hard. If these men wanted a decent burial they should have got themselves kilt in summer.

SNOW

Falling straight down: a windless night.

We hear a murmuring male voice from inside the cabin.

Mattie is finishing rubbing down her horse.

Mattie
Sleep well, Little Blackie. . .

She puts up the brush and pulls an apple from her apple bag.

. . . I have a notion that tomorrow we will reach our object. We are "hot on the trail". . .

The horse chomps up the apple and she rubs its muzzle as it chews.

. . . It seems that we will overtake Tom Chaney in the Winding Stair Mountains. I would not want to be in his shoes.

The horse huffs and blows.

FRONT OF THE CABIN

We are raking the four dead men who have been carelessly propped against the outside wall to sit in an irregular row. Mattie passes them, with a brief look, and opens the door, and the murmuring voice from inside fans up louder.

INSIDE

As Mattie enters. We see LeBoeuf musing before the fire as he cleans his Sharp's carbine —an awkward operation given the injury to his shoulder, now bandaged.

All we see of Rooster, seated further from the fire, is a pair of boots, and legs stretching into darkness.

Mattie goes to the pot of food on the fire.

LeBoeuf

Azh I understand it, Chaney—or Chelmzhford, azh he called himshelf in Texas—shot the shenator'zh dog. When the shenator remonshtrated Chelmzhford shot him azh well. You could argue that the shooting of the dog wazh merely an inshtansh of *malum prohibitum*, but the shooting of a shenator izh indubitably an inshtansh of *malum in shay*.

Rooster is a voice in the darkness:

Rooster

Malla-men what?

Mattie

Malum in se. The distinction is between an act that is wrong in itself, and an act that is wrong only according to our laws and mores. It is Latin.

We hear the *pthoonk* of a bottle yielding its cork, followed by the *pthwa* of the cork's being spit out.

Rooster

I am struck that LeBoeuf is shot, trampled, and nearly severs his tongue and not only does not cease to talk but spills the banks of English.

We hear liquid slosh as the bottle is tipped back.

LeBoeuf

(placidly)

I wuzh within three hundred yardzh of Chelmzhford once. The closhesht I have been. With the Sharp'sh carbine, that izh within range. But I wuzh mounted, and had the choish of firing off-hand, or dishmounting to shoot from resht—which would allow Chelmzhford to augment the dishtansh. I fired mounted—and fired wide.

We hear the smack of lips releasing bottleneck, and a wet breath.

Rooster

. . . You could not hit a man at three hundred yards if the gun was resting on Gibraltar.

LeBoeuf
The Sharp'sh carbine izh an inshtrument of uncanny power and precizhun.

Rooster
I have no doubt that the gun is sound.

Silence.

LeBoeuf shrugs.

MORNING

Wide: three riders leave the cabin single-file.

Jump in: pushing Mattie, who rides last in line. LeBoeuf is in front of her. Rooster leads, head tipping momentarily back to swig from a bottle.

He then half-hums, half-scats a tune.

Mattie twists to look behind.

Her point-of-view: pulling away from the cabin, against the wall of which the four dead men are now semi-drifted over with snow. Rooster's humming has stopped and we hear his voice:

Rooster
That was "Johnny in the Low Ground." There are very few fiddle tunes I have not heard. Once heard they are locked in my mind forever. It is a sadness to me that I have sausage fingers that cannot crowd onto a fretboard—little fat girls at a cotillion. "Soldier's Joy"!

He launches into another song, interrupted by the slosh of liquid as he takes a drink. Mattie looks forward again and LeBoeuf turns to look back at her. He keeps his voice low:

LeBoeuf
I don't believe he shlept.

Still without looking back, Rooster projects:

Rooster
Fort Smith is a healthy distance, LeBoeuf, but I would

encourage the creature you ride to try to make it in a day. Out here a one-armed man looks like easy prey.

LeBoeuf

And a one-eyed man—who can't shshoodt? Why don't you tshurn back, Khoghburn?

Rooster

I will do fine.

He twists around to gaily hector LeBoeuf:

. . . I know where the Parmalee's claim is. I am uninjured, I am provisioned—and we agreed to separate.

LeBoeuf

In conscschiensh you cannot shite our agreement. You are the pershon who shshot me.

Mattie

Mr. LeBoeuf has a point, Marshal. It is an unfair leg-up in any competition to shoot your opposite number.

Rooster

God damn it! I don't accept it as a given that I did shoot LeBoeuf. There was plenty of guns going off.

LeBoeuf

I heard a rifle and felt the ball. You mishshed your shshodt, Khoghburn, admit it. You are more handicapped without the eye than I without the arm.

Rooster

Missed my shot! I can hit a gnat's eye at ninety yards!

He reins his horse up, hastily tips the bottle to his mouth to make sure it is empty, and then hurls it high.

He pulls out a navy six-gun and fires.

The bottle reaches the height of its arc untouched, and drops.

Rooster cocks his head at the landed bottle several paces distant. He shoots again and misses.

He shoots a third time and the bottle shatters.

Rooster
The chinaman is running them cheap shells on me again.

LeBoeuf
I tdhought you were going to shay the shun was in your eyezh. That izh to shay, your eye.

Rooster starts to dismount, finishing in a semi-controlled fall. He dusts one knee and reaches into his saddlebag. He pulls out a corn dodger and heaves it up.

He fires. The corn dodger is obliterated.

He reaches two corn dodgers from the saddlebag.

Rooster
Two at one time!

He hurls them and quickly fires twice. Nothing happens; he quickly fires three times at the falling corn dodgers, missing.

Scowling, he throws a single corn dodger and is just raising his gun when another gun goes off, making him jump.

LeBoeuf has fired with a gun in his left hand, missing.

Rooster
I will chunk one high. Hold fire.

He reaches into the saddlebag and hurls it high. Both he and Leboeuf fire. It explodes.

LeBoeuf
There.

Rooster
There?! My bullet!

LeBoeuf
Your bullet? If you hit what you aim at, eckshplain my shoulder!

Mattie
Gentlemen, shooting cornbread out here on the prairie is getting us no closer to the Ned Pepper gang.

Rooster
One more, this will prove it. Hold fire!

He tosses a corn dodger and fires. It holds to its arc and falls. LeBoeuf is smug.

LeBoeuf
Azh I shed, Khoghburn.

Rooster roars:

Rooster
Did you not see the piece fly off?!

RIDING

Some time later.

Rooster sways in the saddle, holding a bottle, humming.

He tips his head up and tilts the bottle all the way back, confirming that this one too is now empty.

Riding forward, he leans out of the saddle, stretching low to one side, his hand extended with the bottle. Wavering, he places it upon a large rock as he passes.

His arm waves for balance as he straightens but he keeps his place on the horse. He half-turns, propping himself with one hand on his saddle-back, to address Mattie and LeBoeuf:

Rooster
Find our way back!

SKY

Framed by a mine entrance.

Rooster steps into the square, wood-beam frame of the entrance, looking in.

A beat, and he pulls out his six-gun and fires in.

Echoing ricochets.

Wide outside: Rooster before the entrance; Mattie and LeBoeuf standing close by. Very

still.

The little camp is deserted.

Rooster turns to pan the hills.

At length:

Rooster
Lucky Ned!

Very faint echo.

Faintly, from our distant perspective:

LeBoeuf
Very good, Khoghburn. Now what.

CRACKLING CAMPFIRE

It is raining.

The campfire is roughly canopied by a hide draped at a cant over a pair of tree branches.

Mattie pours hot water from a kettle into a large tin cup holding a corn dodger. She takes a fork and starts mashing the dodger into mush.

LeBoeuf sits before the fire, coat over his head, one hand on his jaw, which is swollen.

LeBoeuf
Cogburn does not want me eating out of his store.

Mattie
That is silly. You have not eaten the whole day, and it is my store not his.

Rooster
Let him starve!

Rooster, bellicose, stumbles to the fire with a few thin branches. As he leans in toward the fire the water draining off the low edge of the canopy drums onto his neck. He waves a hand back at it like a man swatting flies.

Rooster
He does not track! He does not shoot—except at foodstuffs!—

LeBoeuf
That wazh your idea.

Rooster
—He does not contribute! He is a millstone, with opinions!
He is a man who walks in front of bullets!

Rooster sits heavily, a stretching leg kicking away an empty bottle. Rain patters on his hat.

. . . He is a drag-brake for horses!

Mattie
Mr. LeBoeuf drew single-handed upon the Lucky Ned Pepper Gang while we fired safely from cover, like a band of sly Injuns!

Rooster
We?

Mattie
It is unfair to indict a man when his jaw is swollen and tongue mangled and who is therefore unable to rise to his own defense!

LeBoeuf
I can thpeak for mythelf. I am hardly obliged to anther the ravingth of a drunkard. It ith beneath me.

He rises and starts gathering his things.

. . . I shall make my own camp elthwhere. It ith you who have nothing to offer, Khoghburn. A shad picture indeed. Thish izh no longer a manhunt, it izh a debauch. The Texath Ranger preththeth on alone.

Rooster
Take the girl! I bow out!

LeBoeuf
A fine thing to deshide once you have brought her into the middle of the Choctaw Nation.

Rooster
I bow out! I wash my hands!

Mattie
Gentlemen, we cannot fall out in this fashion, so close to our goal, with Tom Chaney nearly in hand!

Rooster erupts:

Rooster
In hand?! If he is not in a shallow grave, somewhere between here and Fort Smith, he is gone! Long gone! Thanks to Mr. LeBoeuf, we missed our shot! We have barked, and the birds have flown! Gone gone gone! Lucky Ned and his cohort, gone! Your fifty dollars, gone! Gone the whiskey seized in evidence! The trail is cold, if ever there was one! I am a foolish old man who has been drawn into a wild goose chase by a harpy in trousers—and a nincompoop! Well, Mr. LeBoeuf can wander the Choctaw Nation for as long as he likes; perhaps the local Indians will take him in and honor his gibberings by making him Chief! You, sister, may go where you like! I return home! Our engagement is terminated! I bow out!

He whips his robe over himself.

MINUTES LATER

Wide on Mattie, staggering toward us carrying a saddle. We boom down to bring Little Blackie into the foreground as Mattie takes the last few stumbling steps forward, almost at a run so as to let her inertia help her heave the saddle up onto the horse's back.

Mattie
I am going with you.

LeBoeuf, cinching a saddle onto his woolly horse, looks around.

LeBoeuf
Oh, that izh not poshible.

Mattie
Have I held you back? I have a Colt's dragoon revolver which I know how to use, and I would be no more of a burden to you than I was to the marshal.

LeBoeuf

That izh not my worry. You have earned your shpurzh, that izh clear enough—you have been a regular "old hand" on the trail. But Cogburn izh right, even if I would not give him the shatishfaction of consheding it. The trail izh cold, and I am conshiderably diminished.

Mattie

How can you give up now, after the many months you've dedicated to finding Chaney? You have shown great determination. I misjudged you. I picked the wrong man.

LeBoeuf

I would go on in your company if there were clear way to go. But we would be shtriking out blindly. Chelmshford izh gone—we have chaished him right off the map. There izh nothing for it. I am bound for Texash, and it izh time for you to go home too.

He swings himself up onto the horse.

. . . The marshal, when he shoberzh, izh your way back.

Mattie

I will not go back. Not without Chaney, dead or alive.

LeBoeuf

I misjudged you as well. I eckshtend my hand.

He does, dropping a hand gloved in rough suede. She refuses to take it.

Mattie

Mr. LeBoeuf! Please!

He remains with hand extended. She hesitates, sees there is no give, and reaches for up for the hand. They shake.

LeBoeuf

Adiosh!

He saws the horse around and sets it to a prancing walk, his spurs jingling.

The sound recedes, leaving behind Rooster's snoring from the campfire.

CAMPFIRE

Rooster's snores bump up at the cut.

Mattie enters, gazes down for a thinking beat at the passed-out lawman, then lies down on her robe.

She lies still, gazing up.

After a long beat she abruptly rises.

She recedes toward the horses. As she reaches them we hear Little Blackie snort and blow.

Mattie returns with a length of coiled rope. She plays it out in a loop around her robe. She lies down again. She closes her eyes.

Fade out.

EARY MORNING

We are high and close on Rooster, asleep. Face mottled red, he looks like hell. He emits a symphony of respiratory noises as breath fights through layers of phlegm.

Reverse on Mattie, looking down at him.

Wider on the forlorn campsite—Mattie standing, Rooster awkwardly sprawled sleeping, LeBoeuf gone.

Close on a bucket: Mattie's hand enters to grab it.

EMBANKMENT

We hear rushing water.

Mattie descends, carefully stiff-legged, down a steep slope thick with trees and brush.

She emerges onto the bank of a fast-flowing stream, shallow at this point and loud.

Mattie takes a couple of steps into the water to dip the bucket. Soft, behind her, we see four horses watering at the opposite bank, just downstream.

Mattie stoops to fill the bucket. Turning as she straightens, she sees the four horses.

Surprised, she drops the bucket and stares.

The horses huff and blow in the water. They are not wild—they wear tack—but there is no rider in sight, until:

A man straightens and emerges from behind one of the horses. The first thing we notice about him is the silhouette of the rifle projecting over one shoulder, slung to the man's back with a piece of sash cord.

He looks at something floating by in the stream: Mattie's bucket. He looks up. We jump closer:

The man has a black mark on his forehead.

Seeing Mattie, who still gapes at him, he hastily swings his rifle round and trains it on her. He takes cautious, splashing steps forward.

Chaney
Well now I know you. Your name is Mattie. You are little Mattie the bookkeeper. Isn't this something.

He grins, relaxing. He slings the rifle back over his shoulder.

Mattie
Yes, and I know you, Tom Chaney.

Chaney
What are you doing here?

Mattie
I came to fetch water.

Mattie pulls the flour sack from her coat pocket and works carefully at the cord that cinches it shut. Chaney watches.

Chaney
I mean what are you doing here in these mountains?

Mattie
I have not been formally deputized but I am acting as an agent for Marshal Reuben Cogburn and Judge Parker's court.

Mattie has the cinch loose. She reaches the Colt's Dragoon out of the sack and points it at Chaney.

. . . I have come to take you back to Fort Smith.

Chaney looks at the gun. He grins and puts hands on hips.

Chaney
Well I will not go. How do you like that?

Mattie
There is a posse of officers up on the hill who will force you to go.

Chaney
That is interesting news. How many is up there?

Mattie
Right around fifty. They are all well armed and they mean business. What I want you to do now is come on across the creek and walk in front of me up the hill.

Chaney
I think I will oblige the officers to come after me.

Mattie
If you refuse to go I will have to shoot you.

Chaney
Oh? Then you had better cock your piece.

Mattie gives a dismayed look at the gun and tries to pull the hammer back. It has a heavy pull: she struggles, using two thumbs.

Chaney watches, smiling.

. . . All the way back til it locks.

Mattie
I know how to do it.

She pulls the hammer back further and we hear it notch. She looks up.

. . . You will not go with me?

Chaney
I think not. It is just the other way around. You are going

with me. I will—

Mattie fires.

Chaney, shocked, takes a staggering step back.

Mattie stumbles and falls back under the recoil, into the stream but careful to hold the gun high and dry. She awkwardly reclaims her footing and retrains the gun. Chaney is looking down at his bleeding side.

Chaney
I did not think you would do it.

Mattie
What do you think now?

Chaney
One of my short ribs is broken. It hurts jiggers every breath I take.

Mattie
You killed my father when he was trying to help you. I have one of the gold pieces you took from him. Now give me the other.

She is struck by a worrying thought. She hastily recocks the gun.

Chaney
I regret that shooting. Mr. Ross was decent to me but he ought not to have meddled in my business.

Crashing from the brush up the hill, and a voice:

Rooster
Mattie!

Mattie
I am down here! Chaney is taken into custody!

Chaney
I was drinking and I was mad through and through. Nothing has gone right for me.

There is yelling from the other bank now too.

Mattie
No, you are just a piece of trash, that is all.

Chaney
Everything is against me. Now I am shot by a child.

He sloshes suddenly forward, water kicking up before him.

Mattie
Stop!

She squeezes the trigger, but the gun dry fires.

Chaney grabs the gun and flings it away, then holds on to Mattie and slaps her.

Mattie
Help me! Down here! Hurry up!

Two men burst through the brush from Chaney's side of the river. One is in woolly chaps —Lucky Ned Pepper. The other is taller and dressed almost formally in a linen suit and string tie and a bear coat. Both men bear Winchester repeating rifles.

Chaney is dragging Mattie to their bank, slapping at her along the way.

Rooster emerges from his side of the riverbank carrying a side arm.

The men exchange fire.

Lucky Ned
(to Chaney)
Take them horses you got and move!

He grabs Mattie from Chaney and keeps her between himself and the far bank as he fires again.

One hand to his bleeding side, Chaney lunges for the horses' leads.

Rooster has retreated back to the tree cover, as has the well dressed man on our side. Intermittent gunshots and the panicked neighing of horses. Lucky Ned falls back into the trees with Mattie and starts pulling her up the steep hill.

Chaney follows pulling the string of horses. He is breathing hard and blood stains the front of his shirt.

Lucky Ned
(to Chaney)
Get on up that hill! Don't you stop.

He twists Mattie around to face him and we see him clearly for the first time. Part of his upper lip and three of his front teeth are missing.

. . . Who all is down there?

Mattie
Marshal Cogburn and fifty more officers.

Lucky Ned throws Mattie to the ground. He puts a muddy boot on her neck.

Lucky Ned
Tell me another lie and I will stove your head in!

Mattie manages to choke out:

Mattie
Just the marshal.

Lucky Ned
Cogburn! Do you hear me?

Silence.

. . . You answer me, Rooster! I will kill this girl! You know I will do it!

Rooster's Voice
The girl is nothing to me! She is a runaway from Arkansas!

Lucky Ned
That is very well! Do you advise me to kill her?

Rooster's Voice
Do what you think is best, Ned! She is nothing to me but a lost child!

A short beat, through which we hear only the rush of riverwater. Then, Rooster's voice again:

. . . Think it over first.

Lucky Ned
I have already thought it over! You get mounted double fast! If I see you riding over that bald ridge to the northwest I will spare the girl. You have five minutes!

He breaks open his rifle and starts to reload.

Rooster
I will need more than five minutes!

Lucky Ned
I will not give you more time.

Rooster
There will be a party of marshals in here soon, Ned! Let me have Chaney and the girl and I will mislead them for six hours!

Lucky Ned
Too thin, Rooster! Too thin! Your five minutes is running! No more talk!

He pulls Mattie to her feet. Rooster's voice trails away:

Rooster's Voice
I am leaving but you must give me time!

Lucky Ned gives Mattie a rough push.

Lucky Ned
Up that hill!

Mattie advances, Lucky Ned giving periodic shoves from behind.

A stout young man with a shotgun leaps out from behind a slab of limestone in front of them. He has a round face and idiot eyes.

He makes loud turkey-gobbling noises at Mattie.

Though Mattie is startled Lucky Ned does not immediately react, but he does finally tire of the turkey noises:

Lucky Ned
Quiet there!

The idiot makes a pig-squealing sound in acknowledgment and then falls quiet, loping alongside Mattie and Lucky Ned.

Mattie
You will not shoot me.

Lucky Ned is grim:

Lucky Ned
I will do what I have to do.

They are ascending out of the trees onto a bare rock ledge not quite at the crest of the mountain. The rock floor is uneven and broken by fissures and holes. A cave-like setback at the far end of the rock shelf is half-curtained with a hide. A rough camp.

A cookfire burns on the open rock. Two coffeepots warm leaning against the inside of the fire's piled-stone perimeter. A skillet holds bacon.

A man squats at the fire, holding a piece of bacon, turned to watch Lucky Ned and Mattie's approach. He wears a filthy Union army uniform with officer's boards. His mouth is an 0 of surprise.

Mattie
Can I have some of that bacon?

Lucky Ned
Help yourself. Have some of the coffee.

Mattie
I do not drink coffee. I am fourteen.

Lucky Ned
We do not have buttermilk. And we do not have bread. We are poorly supplied. What are you doing here?

Tom Chaney has reached the rock ledge and he charges Mattie with a yell.

Chaney
I will wring your scrawny neck!

Lucky Ned knocks him aside.

Lucky Ned
Let that go! Farrell, see to his wound. What happened? What are you doing here?

Mattie

I will tell you what and you will see that I am in the right. Tom Chaney there shot my father to death in Fort Smith and robbed him of two gold pieces and stole his mare. Her name is Judy but I did not see her down at the river. I was informed Rooster Cogburn had grit and I hired him out to find the murderer. A few minutes ago I came upon Chaney watering the horses. He would not be taken in charge and I shot him. If I had killed him I would not be now in this fix. My revolver misfired.

Lucky Ned

They will do it. It will embarrass you every time. Most girls like to play pretties, but you like guns do you?

Mattie

I do not care a thing in the world about guns. If I did I would have one that worked.

Chaney

I was shot from ambush, Ned. The horses was blowing and making noise. It was that officer that got me.

Mattie

How can you sit there and tell such a big story?

Chaney, squatting with his shirt pulled up for the ex-soldier to work on his wound, now rises.

Chaney

That pit is a hundred feet deep and I will throw you into it and leave you to scream and rot! How do you like that?

Mattie

No you won't. This man will not let you have your way. He is your boss and you must do as he tells you.

Chaney turns to Lucky Ned who has a spyglass to his eye, scanning a ridge across the river.

Chaney

Five minutes is well up!

Lucky Ned speaks quietly, without lowering the glass:

Lucky Ned
I will give him a little more time.

From somewhere in the woods below we hear the idiot's gobbling noises.

Chaney
How much more?

Lucky Ned
Til I think he has had enough.

The voice of the well dressed man floats up from the woods:

Well Dressed Man
He is gone, Ned! I can see nothing! We had best make a move!

Lucky Ned
Hold fast a while there, Doctor!

Mattie looks at Chaney moaning in pain as the ex-soldier works on his side.

Mattie
Why doesn't the Doctor do that?

Lucky Ned replies absently, still gazing out:

Lucky Ned
He is not a medical doctor. Was that Rooster waylaid us night before last?

Mattie
It was Marshal Cogburn and myself.

Lucky Ned
Yourself, eh? You and Cogburn, quite the posse.

He sees something and hastily raises the glass.

A horseman is ascending the treeless ridge across the river with a riderless horse—Little Blackie—in tow. At the top he pauses and turns, and draws a revolver from his saddle and points it skyward. We see the gun kick and breathe gunsmoke. A second later we hear the shot.

Lucky Ned lowers the glass and takes a gun and shoots skyward. He raises the glass again.

The horseman turns away and proceeds on over the crest. He is gone.

Lucky Ned turns to Mattie. He comes and squats at the fire.

Lucky Ned
Your friend is gone. You are alone.

The well dressed man and the idiot trudge up from the woods onto the rock ledge.

The man in the dirty uniform continues to perform crude field surgery on Chaney, digging into his side with a knife to extract the bullet. As Chaney moans the idiot makes calf-bawling noises in imitation.

Well Dressed Man
We must move, Ned.

Lucky Ned
You are too nervous, Doctor. It will be hours before he is back with help.

Lucky Ned turns back to Mattie.

. . . What happened to Quincy, and The Kid?

Mattie
They are both dead. I was in the very middle of it. It was a terrible thing to see. Do you need a good lawyer?

Lucky Ned
I need a good judge. What about Coke Hayes—the old fellow shot off his horse?

Mattie
Dead as well. His depredations have come to an end.

Lucky Ned
Poor Coke. He rode back for me. Coke Hayes had spine, and could keep his wits in a tight spot. Dead now, but he should have been dead ten times afore now. Your friend Rooster does not collect many prisoners.

Mattie
He is not my friend. He has abandoned me to a congress of louts.

Lucky Ned
You do not varnish your opinions.

Well Dressed Man
Are we staying here for chat?

The idiot is still bawling. Chaney grabs a stone and flings it at him and the idiot scampers back, making goat noises. Chaney grabs, moaning, at the wound aggravated by this fresh exertion.

The man in officer's boards laughs.

Soldier
Do an owl, Harold!

Idiot
Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!

Chaney
Let us cut up the winnings from the Katie Flyer.

Lucky Ned straightens from the fire and begins to collect his meager belongings. The other men follow suit.

Lucky Ned
There will be time for that at The Old Place.

Chaney
I will saddle the grey.

Lucky Ned
I have other plans for you.

Chaney
Must I double-mount with the Doctor?

Well Dressed Man
No!

Lucky Ned
No, it will be too chancy with two men up if it comes to a

race. You will wait here with the girl. When we reach Ma's house I will send Carroll back with a fresh mount. You will be out by dark and we will wait for you at The Old Place.

Chaney

I don't like that. Let me ride with you, Ned, just out of here anyway.

Lucky Ned

No. We are short a horse. It can't be helped.

Chaney

Marshals will come swarming.

Lucky Ned

Hours, if they come here at all. They will guess we are all gone.

Mattie

I am not staying here by myself with Tom Chaney.

Lucky Ned

That is the way I will have it.

Mattie

He will kill me. You have heard him say it. He has killed my father and now you will let him kill me.

Lucky Ned

He will do no such thing. Tom, you know the crossing at Cypress Forks, near the log meetinghouse? When you are mounted you will take the girl there and leave her. Do you understand that, Tom? If any harm comes to this child you do not get paid.

Chaney stares at Lucky Ned. His gaze then swings to the idiot.

Chaney

Harold, let me ride up with you.

Idiot

Baaaaa! Baaaaa!

Chaney

Farrel, I will pay you fifty dollars out of my winnings! I am

not heavy!

Soldier
Ha ha! Do the calf again, Harold!

The men, clanking with gear, cross the rock ledge and descend into the woods.

In the quiet, Chaney is disconsolate.

Chaney
Everything is against me.

Mattie
You have no reason to whine. If you act as the bandit chief instructed, and no harm comes to me, you will get your winnings at The Old Place.

We faintly hear the rest of his party mount up and gallop off. Chaney drops heavily before the fire to sit staring.

Chaney
They will not wait for me at The Old Place. Lucky Ned has left me, knowing I am sure to be caught when I leave on foot.

Mattie
He is sending a mount.

Chaney
That was a story. Keep still now. I must think over my position and how I may improve it.

A silent beat.

Mattie
Where is the second California gold piece?

Chaney continues to stare silently into the fire.

Mattie
What have you done with Papa's mare?

Chaney
Keep still, you little busybody.

More brooding silence.

Mattie
Are you thinking about The Old Place? If you will let me go, I will swear to it in an affidavit and once you are brought to justice it may go easier on you.

Chaney rises, glaring at her.

Chaney
I tell you I can do better than that. I do not intend to be caught. I need no affidavit.

He is striding toward her. She backs toward the ledge.

. . . All I need is your silence. And I will have it.

Without breaking stride he plows into her, good hand raised to catch her by the throat.

She tumbles backward, Chaney on top of her sweating and snarling.

. . . Your father was a busybody like you. There are always people who will tell you what's right.

On her back Mattie struggles, but Chaney, straddling her, has her pinned. His good hand is still on her throat. She claws at it.

He swats her with his free hand. Her clawing stops.

Chaney is wincing from the swing of his own arm. As he leans over her his opened wound dribbles blood onto Mattie along with his sweat.

. . . In honesty, I do not regret shooting him. He thought Tom Chaney was small. Lucky Ned thinks the same. And you would give me an affidavit.

He reaches back awkwardly toward his calf with his bad hand, groaning with the stretch. We hear the *schlick* of steel and his hand reappears holding a knife taken from a leg sheath.

. . . You are all against me. Everything is against me.

He pushes against the underside of Mattie's chin, stretching her neck.

Her eyes roll down in their sockets to watch as Chaney regrips the knife and lowers it to her throat, his knuckles whitening with tension.

. . . But here at least I have matters in hand, and once I have done for you—

Whack—a rifle stock swings into frame, connecting with Chaney's head. His head snaps to one side and then lolls back as he slowly straightens, ropey drool and blood pouring from his mouth. He sways briefly and then collapses onto Mattie.

A hand enters to pull him off. Mattie blearily props herself on her elbows.

LeBoeuf is panting and sweating from his climb. He gazes down at Chaney. Once he has breath:

LeBoeuf
Sho that ish Chelmthford. Shtrange to be sho closhe at lasht.

Mattie
How is it you are here?

LeBoeuf's look breaks from Chaney. He pulls his pipe from his pocket and lights it.

LeBoeuf
I heard the shotsh and went down to the river. . .

He crosses the rock ledge.

. . . Cogburn outlined a plan. Hizh part, I fear, izh rash. *(reacts to hole)* But that izh a pit there! Mind your footing.

He skirts the large hole and reaches the shelf's far lip and gazes out. Before him is a steep drop-off. We see the very crowns of near pines and then, four hundred yards away, the land flattening to an open meadow.

Mattie, also gazing out, comes up beside LeBoeuf.

Mattie
A plan?

LeBoeuf points with his pipe.

LeBoeuf
He returnzh for Lucky Ned.

Lucky Ned, the Parmalees, and the Doctor are just entering the low meadow, riding away. As they do so Rooster enters at the far side, facing. He draws one of his navy sixes as he

advances.

Mattie
One against four. It is ill advised.

Leboeuf shrugs.

LeBoeuf
He would not be dishuaded.

He and Mattie both watch as, below, the parties advance on each other at a walk. Eighty yards separating them, they halt.

THE MEADOW

Rooster and Lucky Ned eye each other. After a beat:

Lucky Ned
Well, Rooster, will you give us the road?

Idiot
Moo! Moo!

Rooster
Hello, Ned. How many men are with the girl?

Lucky Ned
Just Chaney. Our agreement is in force: she was in excellent health when last I saw her.

Rooster nods.

A beat.

Rooster
Farrel, I want you and your brother to stand clear. You as well, Doctor. I have no interest in you today.

Lucky Ned
What is your intention, Rooster? Do you think one on four is a dogfall?

Rooster
I mean to kill you in one minute, Ned. Or see you hanged in

Fort Smith at Judge Parker's convenience. Which will you have?

Ned Pepper laughs.

Lucky Ned
I call that bold talk for a one-eyed fat man!

Idiot
Koo koo roo! Blawk!

Rooster
Fill your hand, you son of a bitch!

He puts the reins in his teeth, grabs his other revolver with the hand now free, and spurs his horse.

ROCK LEDGE

Mattie watches him charge.

The facing four charge to meet him.

Mattie
Shoot them, Mr. LeBoeuf!

LeBoeuf
Too far, moving too fasht.

Over the distant laughter of the idiot, the crackle of gunfire commences.

THE MEADOW

Rooster turns his head to either side as he fires, bringing his good eye into play.

The idiot is gaily waving a revolver over his head, not firing, squawking like a chicken as he charges.

A shot from Rooster kills him and swipes him neatly off his horse.

Farrel Parmalee has a shotgun. It roars.

Shot peppers Rooster. He returns fire.

Farrel Parmalee's horse is hit. It stumbles, and Farrel is dashed forward, snapping his neck.

The Doctor Indian-rides past, sliding down and hooking an ankle on his saddle so that he may ride in the cover of his horse's body. He makes for the treeline on the far side of the meadow.

Rooster and Lucky Ned are charging each other, both firing.

They pass each other—both still mounted—but Rooster's horse has been hit and it falls, pinning Rooster's leg. His guns are gone, lost in the fall.

Rooster, bleeding from sprayed shot in neck, face, and shoulder, struggles and unpins his leg.

ROCK LEDGE

LeBoeuf sits cross-legged and brings the butt of his Sharp's carbine to rest against his injured shoulder. He nudges the gunstock back and forth, looking for the anchor that will cause him the least pain. He cocks his head to sight, puffing pipesmoke.

MEADOW

Lucky Ned is reining his horse around with his left hand. His right arm dangles. He walks his horse toward Rooster, who is getting to his feet.

Lucky Ned

Well Rooster, I am shot to pieces. It seems neither of us is to see Judge Parker.

He drops the reins to reach out a gun with his one working arm.

ROCK LEDGE

LeBoeuf, sighting.

LeBoeuf

Oh lord.

He squeezes the trigger.

He screams as the gun roars and bucks back into his shoulder.

THE MEADOW

Rooster is facing Lucky Ned.

Lucky Ned raises his gun at Rooster and—is shot in the chest.

As we hear the weakly distant guncrack Ned flops backward, slides halfway down one side of the saddle, and dangles, briefly, foot tangled in a stirrup, horse standing unperturbed.

Then, he drops.

ROCK LEDGE

Mattie whoops as LeBoeuf groans.

Mattie
Some bully shot! Four hundred yards, at least!

LeBoeuf sets the rifle down and gropes at his shoulder.

LeBoeuf
I am afraid I have—

A rock is brought down on his head by Tom Chaney.

Mattie screams.

LeBoeuf has collapsed and is motionless. Chaney drops the rock and stoops for the rifle.

Mattie is already dragging it away. She grabs it up.

Mattie
Stand up, Tom Chaney!

Chaney stands nearly straight—as much as his injuries will allow, and—

Boom!—the blast catches Chaney in the chest and he is blown back off the ledge, looking surprised. He falls to oblivion.

But the carbine recoil pushes Mattie stumbling back and this, with the bad footing at the lip of the pit behind her, sends her falling.

PIT

Mattie is tumbling. She bounces down a very steep slope, disturbed earth tumbling with her, protruding roots and slender upgrowing foliage slapping at her on her descent.

As she descends more or less feet-first something snags an ankle and her inertia sends her upper body on down past the pinned leg. She jerks to a halt head-downmost on the steep slope.

The patter of falling dirt subsides. Silence. Heavy breathing.

Mattie, lying face-up, does a painful half sit-up to look around.

Above her, her left foot is snarled through some roots. Well beyond, very high, weak light defines the mouth of the pit.

Using her elbows she pivots, scooting her upper body uphill so that she is no longer below her foot. She reaches the cuff of her pants on the trapped leg and pulls it up to expose the shin.

A splinter of broken bone has punctured the skin.

She pulls the cuff back down.

She stretches to slip fingers between her boot and the roots in which it is fouled. She just manages to work in two fingers; in wrenching around, the root has cinched tight. She tugs feebly at the root, which shows no signs of give.

She looks back up.

The small hole of weak daylight, dust drifting up toward it.

Mattie
Mr. LeBoeuf! Are you alive!

No answer.

. . . Mr. LeBoeuf!

Arms tiring, she lays back again against earth. She looks around.

Partway round the pit, just at her level, something difficult to discern in the semi-dark: two mirroring shapes, close to each other: is it the soles of a pair of boots?

Mattie squints. She props herself partway up.

Higher view: they are boots—worn by a corpse—stretching away from us, foreshortened. The man's skull has been partly shattered by the protruding rock against which it rests.

Mattie surveys the body. Her attention is caught by something:

The skeletal remains are still clothed and there seems to be something held by a bandolier strapped across the chest, over the body's decomposing blue shirt but beneath a tattered vest. A sheath is just visible high on the strap, near the corpse's shoulder. The butt-end of a knife juts out.

Mattie stretches, reaching.

She can just get to a boot.

She pulls.

The man's remains seem to be fairly light. They drag across earth, raising dust, tending to slide away with the grade of the pit.

Mattie reels the body in, careful not to let go and lose it down the hill. She pulls shoe, pants cuff, pants knee, belt. The bandolier is close.

Her fingers curl around shirt, and pull.

The shirt's buttons softly pop and fiber dust drifts up as the fabric falls to pieces. Rib cage is exposed beneath.

Mattie hastily reaches and curls fingers around ribs. She pulls. She is about to get the knife when—

A glistening something inside the rib cage—guts?—starts to slowly move. But it can't be guts: it is gliding, coiling, under its own power.

A faint rattle.

Mattie screams as the ball of waking snakes quickens. One snake starts to slowly emerge, and she bats the body away.

She pushes and kicks with her free leg, as much as her pinned attitude will allow. The body, coming to pieces, slides dustily down into the dark. It disappears. Fiber and bone dust float up toward us. We hear rattles.

Mattie hastily reaches for the root that pins her and in a panic pulls, looking back toward the body. The root holds fast.

A snake is sluggishly and sinuously weaving up the earth toward her. She muscles her body upward so that once again her pinned leg is bottom-most.

Mattie

Mr. LeBoeuf!

Another snake is behind the first. . . several more behind that.

As the snakes advance to the level of her pinned leg Mattie freezes. The first snake continues climbing, weaving up the slope alongside Mattie's body. She watches it come on, its blunted head with its flicking tongue inches from her face. The head passes, the body goes coiling by.

Another snake undulates onto her pinned leg.

Rooster's Voice

Are you there?

Careful to keep still, eyes on the advancing snakes:

Mattie

I am here!

More snakes climb onto her.

Rooster's Voice

Can you clamber out?

Mattie

I cannot!

A large snake is winding onto her shoulder. She gingerly places a hand for it to coil onto; it does; she holds it at arms length and gently shakes it off.

. . . There are snakes!

Rooster

Awake?

Mattie

Yes!

Rooster appears in the mouth of the pit. He has a rope wrapped round his waist and he starts to descend, half walking, half hopping against the pit wall.

Mattie winces and looks down at one hand.

A small snake wrapped round her wrist has its fangs in the meat of the hand.

Mattie

Ahh!

Rooster

What is that?

She flaps her hand and the snake plops off.

Mattie

I am bit!

BAM!—a burst of orange as Rooster, descended to the level of the lead snakes, starts firing his revolver.

BAM! *BAM*! More orange lightning flashes.

Lively rattling.

The pit fills with roiling gunsmoke.

Rooster starts to stomp as well as fire. He kicks the more sluggish specimens toward the bottom of the pit.

He reaches Mattie and takes out a knife.

Mattie

Does Mr. LeBoeuf survive?

Rooster

He does—even a blow to the head could silence him for only a few short minutes. Where are you bit?

She shows her hand and he makes two slices in the flesh and squeezes out blood. As he does so:

. . . He is in mild distress, having swallowed a good piece of his pipestem. Can you move?

Mattie
My foot is pinned and leg broken.

Rooster stoops with the knife and one slice frees the booted foot. He wraps one arm around Mattie's waist and tips his head back and bellows:

Rooster
I have her! Up with us!

The rope tautens and starts pulling, Rooster helping with his feet.

THE LEDGE

Little Blackie, led by a wobbly LeBoeuf, finishes pulling Rooster and Mattie from the pit.

Rooster is already unwrapping the rope from his waist and talking to LeBoeuf as he and Mattie emerge:

Rooster
I will send help for you as soon as I can. Don't wander off.

Mattie
We are not leaving him!

Rooster heaves her up onto the back of Little Blackie, LeBoeuf helping though blood still flows down one side of his face.

Rooster
I must get you to a doctor, sis, or you are not going to make it. *(to LeBoeuf)* The girl is snakebit. We are off.

He swings up behind her and nods down to LeBoeuf.

. . . I am in your debt for that shot, pard.

LeBoeuf
Never doubt the Texash Ranger.

Rooster reins the horse around and spurs it. LeBouef shouts after:

. . . Ever shtalwart!

The horse takes to the steep slope reluctantly, with stiff legs, Rooster kicking it on. Tree

branches slap at him and take his hat. His face, already peppered with shot, gets new scratches.

THE MEADOW

Mattie is woozy. As Little Blackie crosses the field at full gallop Mattie looks blearily at the littering bodies of horses and men.

Next to Lucky Ned's body his horse, saddled and riderless, swings its head to watch as Rooster and Mattie pass.

Mattie's eyes are closing.

LATE DAY

Mattie's eyes half-open.

Little Blackie plunges on, through a rough road in woods, but slower now, his mouth foaming.

Rooster
Come on, you!

Mattie
We must stop. Little Blackie is played out.

Horrible noises are indeed coming from the horse, but Rooster is grim:

Rooster
We have miles yet.

He leaves off whipping the horse and takes out his knife. He leans back and slashes at the horse's whithers. Little Blackie surges.

Mattie screams.

Mattie
No!

A locked-down shot as horse and riders enter at a gallop and recede.

NIGHT

It has started to snow.

Mattie is flushed and soaked with sweat.

The horse is laboring for breath.

Rooster gives inarticulate curses as he kicks it on.

Mattie looks ahead:

Barely visible in the moonlight a man mounted bareback rides on ahead. A sash cord holds a rifle to his back.

He recedes, outpacing us, disappearing into the darkness and the falling snow.

Mattie

He is getting away.

Rooster

Who is getting away?

Mattie

Chaney.

Rooster

Hold on, sis.

Mattie is falling. It is unclear why.

Her legs squeeze the horses flanks.

Her hand tightens on the horses mane.

Rooster's arm reaches around to hold her.

Little Blackie is giving out, going to his knees and then all the way down.

Rooster hangs on to Mattie as the horse sinks. He pulls her clear, lays her on the ground, and then steps away from her, taking out a gun.

The horrible noises coming from the horse end with a gunshot. Rooster reenters to pick up Mattie but she screams at him and claws at his face, opening fresh gashes.

He ducks his head as best he can to avoid the claws but that is the extent of his reaction.

Rooster
Put your arms around my neck, I will carry.

He presents his back and she relents, clasping her arms. He rises with a pained wheeze and he starts jogging with Mattie piggie-back.

Bouncing at his shoulder, she twists to look back.

In the dark, the darker shape of the dead horse, growing smaller.

Mattie turns forward again, eyes drooping.

LATER

Rooster is loudly wheezing as he carries Mattie before him now, his jog slowed to an unsteady walk. Her eyes are opening again.

They are now on a proper dirt road. Rooster staggers around a turn and does a barely controlled stumble to his knees, and then sits heavily back, Mattie in his lap.

Up ahead is the front porch of Bagby's store, the building dark.

Rooster sits gasping.

Mattie's voice is thick:

Mattie
Where are we?

Rooster takes out his gun, weakly raises his arm, and fires into the air. He sits panting.

Rooster
I have grown old.

The door of the distant store opens and someone emerges, holding a lamp, peering out into the dark.

FADE OUT

TRAIN

We are looking into the window of a moving train. Looking out past us is a thin forty-

year-old woman.

Reflected in the window is a sizable railyard and then, as the train slows, a station. Reading backward in the mirror of the window is the station stop: MEMPHIS.

We hear the voice, familiar from the opening of the movie, of the grown Mattie Ross:

Voice-Over
A quarter of a century is a long time.

TRAIN DOOR

As the train eases to a stop the woman, Mattie, steps down. One sleeve of her dress is pinned up.

Voice-Over
I had written a letter of thanks to Marshal Cogburn, with an invitation to visit, along with the fifty dollars I owed him. In his reply he promised he would try to call next time he came to Fort Smith with prisoners. Brief though his note was, it was rife with misspellings.

Mattie goes along the platform, holding a small bag in one hand and, crushed against its handle, a flier.

. . . The marshal did not visit, nor did he communicate further. I had not been conscious during his leavetaking: by the time Bagby rode us to Fort Smith my hand had turned black. I was not awake when I lost the arm. I later learned that Mr. LeBoeuf recovered fully. When the marshals found him he was searching the pines below the rock ledge for Tom Chaney's body. He found it and took it back to San Saba for the reward. It was well earned.

In the scene, Mattie calls peremptorily to a young boy on the platform:

Mattie
Boy.

She shows him the flier:

The Cole Younger and Frank James
Wild West Show
Riding! Shooting! Lariat "Tricks" !

Don't Leave the Ladies and the Little Ones Behind!
Also Featuring
Rooster Cogburn!
He will amaze you with his skill and dash!
Memphis Fairgrounds
July 18, 1908

The boy looks up and points.

Mattie crosses the platform and further along, descends to the railyard.

The cars of the Wild West Show are parked along a siding. They display gaudily painted scenes of men on rearing horses firing six-guns, of conestoga wagons, war-bonneted Indians, bandana-wearing bad men. Three featured performers have their own vignetted scenes, each depicted as a youngish man engaged in Wild West hell-raising, each with his name painted beneath: Cole Younger, Frank James, and (unrecognizable but for the eyepatch) Rooster Cogburn. Below Rooster's name is the sublegend "He rode with Quantrill! He rode for Parker!"

Around the rail cars cowboys—and some Indians—mill, more wobegone than their painted representations.

Mattie asks someone along the way for directions and is pointed toward the rear of the train.

Voice-Over
Little Frank had sent me the flier. He had chaffed me through the years over the fact that I had not married, calling the marshal my "secret sweetheart," and he sent a note with the advertisement: "Skill and dash—it's not too late, Mattie!" Little Frank and Victoria have always liked jokes and they are all right in their place. I have never held it against either one of them for leaving me at home to look after Mama, and they know it, for I have told them.

Mattie speaks to two men who sit on the rear platform of the rear car. They are old men drinking Coca-Colas. One doffs his hat and rises when Mattie addresses the pair; the other stays seated, slurping from his bottle.

Standing Man
Yes'm, I am Cole Younger. This is Mr. James. It grieves me to tell you that you have missed Rooster. He passed away, what, three days ago, when the show was in Jonesboro Arkansas. Buried him there in the confederate cemetery. Reuben had a complaint what he referred to as "night hoss"

and I believe the warm weather was too much for him. We had some lively times. What was the nature of your acquaintance?

Mattie

I knew the marshal long ago. We too had lively times. Thank you, Mr. Younger.

As she turns to go she addresses Frank James, who has been staring at her:

. . . Keep your seat, trash.

A BOXCAR

Elsewhere; later.

Men load in a muddy pine coffin. Chalked on the coffin top:

Cogburn
Yell County
Hold at station

Voice-Over

I had the marshal's body removed to Dardanelle. The railroads do not like to carry disinterred bodies in the summertime, but I had my way.

The boxcar door is slammed and the train starts to move off.

. . . People love to talk. They love to slander you if you have any substance. They said, Well, she hardly knew that man. . .

CEMETERY

Mattie stands with a prayer book. There is a light, lazy fall of snow.

Voice-Over

. . . It's just like a cranky old maid to pull a stunt like that, burying him in the family plot. They say I love nothing but money and the Presbyterian Church and that is why I never married. It is true that I love my church and my bank. I will tell you a secret. Those same people talk mighty nice when

they come in for a crop loan or a mortgage extension. I care nothing for what they say. I would have married a baboon if I had wanted and fetched it its newspaper and slippers every morning but I never had time to fool with it.

She leaves, striding purposefully past the headstone.

We show the headstone and, beyond, her receding figure.

Reuben Cogburn
1835-1908
A Resolute Officer
Of Parker's Court

Her figure softens as it recedes.

Voice-Over

Anyway, a woman with brains and a frank tongue and one sleeve pinned up and an invalid mother to care for is not widely sought after. I never did see Mr. LeBoeuf again but if he is yet alive I would be pleased to hear from him. I judge he would be in his seventies now and nearer eighty than seventy. I expect some of the starch has gone out of that cowlick. Time just gets away from us.

ORIGINAL